



Post Prayer Speeches – Part II

M. K. GANDHI

Compiled and Edited by

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1. SPEECH OF, SEPTEMBER 27, 1947

NEW DELHI,

September 27, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

Shall I tell you who is my special physician? He is good for me and also good for you. My physician today, in my thought, speech and action, is Rama, Ishwar, Rahim. How can He become our physician? We heard a bhajan addressed to the Lord who removes all miseries of mind, body and soul which human beings are subject to. Hence I felt that the best, unfailing remedy is Ramanama. I can suggest no other remedy to those who come to me. Then take some earth and water treatment. I know that one who has Ramanama inscribed in his heart needs neither earth nor water for treatment. If we are destined to live we shall live. If we have to die, let us die. No one can ride two horses at the same time. If I have faith in Ramanama I must remain firm in that. Anyone not doing so will perish. Rama is the saviour. Does the person who has installed God in his heart ever die? This body is transitory. It may be living this moment and may die the next. How then can I be proud of it? It is futile to keep the body alive when the moment of death has arrived. Guru Nanak was a great religious leader. Other Gurus who came after him did write songs of devotion but they mentioned the name of Nanak in the refrain. This is the culture of India. Perhaps such things happen in many other countries. Whatever that may be, I can only talk of the Indian culture. Mirabai was a great devotee. Mira's name is found at the end of countless bhajans. It was not she who used her name. But Mira's disciples found great satisfaction in attributing their compositions to her. This is a wonderful thing. It is said that Arjun Dev¹ was a great Guru and a great poet. He said: "One may recite Ramanama or Khuda's praise, one may serve Gosain or Allah". It is remarkable that this thing occurs in the Granth Saheb. The allegations against the Sikhs today are, if true, a violation of the teachings of Guru Nanak. That is not the way to bring glory to the Granth Saheb. Nor can the Sikhs make any progress that way. Some Sikh friends had a plain talk with me. They told me that Guru Arjun Dev did not doubt the identity of Rama and Rahim or Krishna and Karim. Then they told me that whether one went on pilgrimage or haj it meant one and the same thing. One may perform puja or bow his head, one may worship God in a temple or bend oneself low in the name of God, one may read the Vedas or



the Book. The Book meant the Koran. One may dress oneself in blue clothes or in white. The Muslim wears blue clothes and the orthodox Hindu wears white. Then, one may be called a Turk or a Hindu. Turks means Muslims. [Nanak] says that he who truly follows God's laws knows His secret.

If I had the time I would have narrated so many things from the Hindu bhajans and kirtans that you would wonder whether the religious sentiment depicted there belonged to Hinduism or Sikhism. Why do we say today that the Muslims have got to leave this country? Why is it said that the plan of settling the Muslims with the Hindus is a mistake and the fourth blunder of the Congress? Whether the Congress implements it or not, it is my plan and if it is a mistake it is my mistake. Others come to me and challenge my being a Mahatma and charge me with ruining Hinduism. But I tell them that what they call my mistake is not a mistake. The real thing is that we are all possessed by a madness today and talk all sorts of things. When we get over that madness, we shall talk sense. That is why I say that what I am saying cannot be a mistake. Those who think I am making a mistake are themselves mistaken. The whole world would blame you if you threw out 41 2 crore Muslims. Would you then point at what is happening in Pakistan? Because Pakistan is not following its religion should I start teaching the Hindus that they should also give up their religion? I have never learnt such a thing. If we protect our Muslim brethren and remain pure ourselves, it would have its own effect on Pakistan. That is my reply to them. Today we should consider what a Christian sister whom you know, Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, has to say. She is the Health Minister. She wishes to help everybody in the refugee camps, whether Hindu or Muslim. But what can she do without support from others? She cannot be partial. She is trying to do her best for everybody. She is partly Christian and partly Muslim and also partly Hindu. Hence, all religions are the same to her. She went there accompanied by some girls. They all went there for doing service. What was there to fear when they were out to do service? But they told me that they were warned against serving the Muslims and were asked to go back if their intention was to serve the Muslims also. I laughed when I heard that. That merely said these things. They were not going to do anything. After all, those Muslims and a few Christians are not going to indulge in any rioting. How will they do it? What do they possess? They are in a bad shape. What is the point of threatening them? Hence I thought I should mention this to you so that we should be on our guard and not indulge in such talk.



In the end I want to tell you that I had purposely mentioned war. But our journalists always like to exaggerate things. They have given the headlines that I wanted war. There are telegrams coming from Calcutta that Gandhi also talks of war. Will there be a war then? What I had said was that I could not think of war even in a dream. After all, would I give up my creed at a critical time? My creed is nonviolence. I have never waged war, nor should anyone else do so. How can we achieve anything by fighting? What I said was that if Pakistan was committing mistakes or if India was committing mistakes, with both the countries having their own independent Governments, how was it possible for one Government to secure justice from the other? It would be different if the two Governments worked in co-operation. Let them have an arbitrator if they cannot work together. If even that cannot be done, then we shall helplessly be dragged into war. Does this imply advocating war? I want to tell both India and Pakistan that they must come to a mutual settlement or accept an arbitrator. But if the Pakistanis insist on taking India by force, then, as I said yesterday, India would have no alternative except to fight. If I am given the charge of the Government I would follow a different path, because I have no military and police force under me. But I am the only one to follow that path. Who would support me? Your Government will do what is expected of it when the time comes. I would continue to chant only one refrain. But, if people do not understand non-violence, to whom can I address myself?

[From Hindi] Prarthana Pravachan—I, pp. 352-6



2. SPEECH OF, SEPTEMBER 28, 1947

NEW DELHI,

September 28, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

Is there anybody in the meeting who is against the recitation from the Koran?
(Two persons raised their hands)

I shall respect your opposition, though I know that the rest of the people would be disappointed that the prayers will not take place. (The Hindustan Times, 29-9-1947, reports that the prayer was however held after the speech “inside Gandhiji’s room with only members of his party”.) With my unflinching faith in non-violence, I can do nothing else. Even so I cannot help saying that you should not disregard the opinion of such a big majority which does not agree with you. From that point of view your behaviour is improper. From what I am going to say later you must realize that the intolerance that you have shown under somebody’s instigation is the evidence of petulance and anger prevalent all over the country today, which has provoked Mr. Churchill to say many bitter things about India. Let me explain to you in Hindustani Mr. Churchill’s speech a summary of which has been sent by Reuter and published in the newspapers this morning: (The paragraph from Winston Churchill’s speech of September 27, is reproduced from Mahatma.)

The fearful massacres which are occurring in India are no surprise to me. We are, of course, only at the beginning of these horrors and butcheries, perpetrated upon one another, with the ferocity of cannibals, by the races gifted with capacities for the highest culture, and who had for generations dwelt, side by side, in general peace, under the broad, tolerant and impartial rule of the British Crown and Parliament. I cannot but doubt, that the future will witness a vast abridgment of the population throughout what has for sixty or seventy years been the most peaceful part of the world and that, at the same time, will come a retrogression of civilization throughout these enormous regions, constituting one of the most melancholy tragedies which Asia has ever known.

You are all aware that Mr. Churchill is a great man. He belongs to the blue blood of England. Marlborough family is very famous in British history. Mr. Churchill took the helm when Great Britain was in great danger after the Second World War started. No



doubt he saved the British Empire from a great danger at the time. It would be wrong to argue that Great Britain could not have won without the help of the United States or other Allied nations. Who else except a man of Mr. Churchill's sharp political diplomacy could have brought all the friendly nations together? Great Britain acknowledged the services of Mr. Churchill who in those days preserved the honour of that country. But after winning the War the nation did not hesitate to choose the Labour Government in order to recover from the terrible loss of life and property which the British Isles had undergone during the War. The British people saw the signs of the times and decided in favour of voluntary abdication from power to end the Empire and establishing instead the imperceptible rule of hearts. India has been divided and then both the countries have voluntarily announced their decision to join the British Commonwealth. The honourable step of granting independence to India was taken by all the parties representing the entire British nation. Mr. Churchill and his party were also in line with others. It may be a different thing that the future may or may not justify this step of the British people. And this had nothing to do with my suggestion that because Mr. Churchill has been a party to the transfer of power, he is expected not to say or do anything which would deprive this measure of its value. There is no doubt that in modern history there is no instance which can be compared with the transfer of power by the British. I am reminded of the sacrifice of Priyadarshi Ashoka. But Ashoka is incomparable and, moreover, he does not belong to modern history. That is why I was pained to read the Reuter's despatch of Mr. Churchill's speech. I take it for granted that this renowned news agency has not misreported Mr. Churchill's speech. By his speech Mr. Churchill has harmed his country which he has greatly served. If he knew that India would be reduced to such a terrible state after freeing itself from the rule of the British Empire, did he, for a moment take the trouble of thinking that the entire responsibility for it lies with the builders of the British Empire and not with those "races" which, in Mr. Churchill's opinion, are capable of giving birth to the greatest civilization? In my view, Mr. Churchill has been too hasty in his sweeping generalization. India's population is several millions. Out of these a few lakhs have taken to the path of barbarism. But these people hardly count. With confidence I invite Mr. Churchill to come to India and study the situation himself. But he must come not as a representative of his Party with fixed opinions, but as an impartial Englishman who values the prestige of his country more than any Party's and intends to help the British Government in making this task a grand success. This unique step of Great Britain would be judged from its consequences. The vivisection of India



unwittingly invited the two parts of the country to fight each other. Granting freedom separately to the two parts seems like a blot on the graceful gift of freedom. It is no use saying that either side is free to come out of the British Commonwealth. This is easier said than done. I do not wish to say anything more on that account. What I have said is enough to show why Mr. Churchill should have been more careful while speaking on this subject. He has run down his colleagues without even studying the situation.

Many of you have given ground to Mr. Churchill for making such remarks. You still have sufficient time to reform your ways and prove Mr. Churchill's prediction wrong. I know nobody listens to me these days. Had it not been so, and had the people continued to listen to me as they did before the negotiations for freedom started, there never would have been that show of barbarism which Mr. Churchill has described with such relish and gross exaggeration. And also you would have been well on the way to solving your economic and other domestic problems.

[From Hindi] Prarthana Pravachan—I, pp. 356-9



3. SPEECH OF, SEPTEMBER 29, 1947

NEW DELHI

September 29, 1947

My reference to the possibility of a war between the two sister Dominions seems, I am told, to have produced a scare in the West. I do not know what reports were sent out by newspaper correspondents. Summaries are always a dangerous enterprise except when they truly reflect the speaker's opinion. An unwarranted summary of a pamphlet¹ I had written about South Africa in 1896 nearly cost me my life. It was so hopelessly unwarranted that within twenty-four hours of my being lynched, European opinion in South Africa was turned from anger into contrition that an innocent man was made to suffer for no fault that he had committed. The moral I wish to draw from the foregoing version is that no one should be held responsible for what he has not said or done.

I hold that not a single mention of war in my speeches can be interpreted to mean that there was any incitement to or approval of war between Pakistan and the Union unless mere mention of it is to be taboo. We have among us the superstition that the mere mention of a snake ensures its appearance in the house in which the mention is made even by a child. I hope no one in India entertains such superstition about war.

I claim that I rendered a service to both the sister States by examining the present situation and definitely stating when the cause of war could arise between the two States. This was done not to promote war but to avoid it as far as possible. I endeavoured, too, to show that if the insensate murders, loot and arson by people continued, they would force the hands of their Governments. Was it wrong to draw public attention to the logical steps that inevitably followed one after another?

India knows, the world should, that every ounce of my energy has been and is being devoted to the definite avoidance of fratricide culminating in war. When a man vowed to non-violence as the law governing human beings dares to refer to war, he can only do it so as to strain every nerve to avoid it. Such is my fundamental position from which I hope never to swerve even to my dying day.

Harijan, 12-10-1947



4. SPEECH OF, SEPTEMBER 30, 1947

NEW DELHI,

September 30, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

It seems to me that we have all become savages. Both Hindus and Muslims have turned savage. Who can determine who has committed more crimes and who has committed less? We cannot go into these details. The Government should try to recall the refugees from Pakistan, which can be done only in consultation with the Government there. There are so many complications. The Government is there to solve those complications. The Government should look after its people or resign. I have no doubt at all about it. Today our Government is something which we can strengthen or bring down. That is democracy. People themselves should remain under control and exercise restraint. They must know the meaning of discipline and observe it. If they do not do this, they become worthless. We must learn this thing if we want to stick to our duty. We must inculcate this in our children from the time they start showing some understanding. You must tell your children that the place of religion is in their hearts and it is not in your power to protect it. You must tell them that you are their father and as their father you have to give them that training. I have taught my children that they must protect their own religion. One of my sons (Manilal Gandhi) is in South Africa. Another (Harilal Gandhi) is drinking away somewhere. I do not even know his whereabouts. One son (Ramdas Gandhi) is at Nagpur eking out his living with great difficulty. One son (Devdas Gandhi) is here. I cannot say that he is earning his livelihood with difficulty. Shall I keep worrying about the religion of each one of them? I am not worrying. Why should I? They are all grown up. I could protect their religion if they were young. And that too in what manner? I would tell them that if they were true Hindus they must have the courage to die for their religion, they could not save it by killing. Now suppose one boy is having a lathi and another a revolver. The boy having the revolver would kill the boy with the lathi. But that is not the way to save religion. Why? As the boy with the lathi is killed his relatives appear. The boy with the revolver being alone brings his revolver, or a brengun or a stengun. And the people on the opposite side would bring ten stenguns. They would force him to embrace Islam or Christianity and threaten him with their numbers and warn him that his weapons



would not save him. And then, although frightened, he would cry out that despite the compulsion he would still consider his religion dearer to him than his life.

Following any religion means belonging to God. The same thing happened in the case of Prahlad. He used to repeat the name of Rama. His father said he should stop it, but Prahlad replied that he could utter no other name. There is a beautiful bhajan about it: Prahlad writes the name of Rama while his guru is dictating another name. He says that he can write no other name and he knows no other name. It is a very sweet bhajan. Prahlad says that his pen can shape no other name. It is said that Prahlad was a mere boy of twelve. Well, that twelve-year-old boy opposed his father and saved his religion. I need not describe how he protected his religion. All Hindus are familiar with the story. But the important thing is that he could protect his religion all by himself. Innumerable instances of this kind can be found in all religions. Now we have our boys and girls. If one believes that woman is weak, I would say that no woman in the world is weak. All are strong. All those who have firm faith in their religion are strong, not weak. So I would suggest that we should first teach our boys and girls that they are not weak. Children have their religion to strengthen them. When people come to me I tell them that the Government should do everything in its power. But it would be wrong to think that unless the Government did something everybody would be converted to Islam. Millions of Muslims are living in India today. It should be carefully considered who they are. Not many of them have come from Arabia. Those who came from Arabia did not constitute the millions. Those millions who became Muslims were all Hindus. Or, say, they were Buddhists. What is the difference between Buddhists and Hindus? In my view there is no difference. Should we not have proper knowledge as to who inhabited Afghanistan? Badshah Khan told me that the Afghans were originally Buddhists and later embraced Islam. But, for that matter, have they forgotten their ancient culture? How could they forget? He told me that even the names of their villages were originally in Sanskrit. They have changed their names, dress and everything else; but they could not change what was lying deep within. How could they forget it? And then, whether in Madras or Bengal or anywhere else, they were all Hindus. You ask them as I ask myself, why they chose to embrace Islam. I am to be blamed for their conversion to Islam. I must do penance; you must, too. Of course, if they have done the correct thing and accepted a religion which is nobler than Hinduism, then let us follow in their footsteps, recite the Kalma, swear by Islam and raise the cry for the victory of Islam! But nothing like that happened. Whom then shall we beat up and whom shall we drive out? They are our own people. They were all



Hindus at the time of our grandfathers and great grandfathers, say, four generations ago, and got converted to Islam. I have gone round all over the country and reminded the Hindus of their wickedness in considering untouchability part of their religion. What has been the result? One part of our community has become the fifth varna. Originally there were four varnas and we made them five and considered the fifth varna as Ati-Shudras. We kept the fifth varna segregated from us. We kept their food separate and declared that they could not live in our midst. We decided to treat them as our slaves. Later they turned to Islam. So all of them were not originally Muslims. Later on some Brahmins also were converted to Islam. Quite a few of them also came from among Kshatriyas as also Vaishyas. But their number was very small. I have shown you how the present crores of Muslims had embraced Islam. Untouchability drove them to Islam. Today we are creating such uproar in India and want to beat up and harass the Muslims and drive them out of the country by any means. No one ever bothers to think from where they should be driven out and where they should be pushed out. We must realize that when someone is attacked and forced into accepting Islam, afterwards he is doomed for no fault of his. But I move about among Muslims and my Muslim friends tell me that Islam has never advocated forcible conversion. People may accept it voluntarily. They may be made aware of the greatness of Islam. But they cannot be brought to accept Islam by cheating or by paying money. The Muslims in this country are all our blood-brothers. That is why I say that we must act only after careful thought. We must consider why they were drawn to Islam. Did they accept Islam for money? Even if you want to earn money or do anything else, go anywhere in the world, you take your religion with you. If you discard religion, you have discarded everything. I want to tell you only one thing and it is that we should not try to kill any Muslim. Let them kill if they want. If they kill that is bad. We would consider them bad. But if they are bad, why should we be bad in return? We can return their wickedness with goodness. If they drink liquor, should we also do the same? I would call upon all Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs to come to their senses and see what religion teaches. As Iqbal said, “religion does not teach mutual hatred”. When Iqbal said this he was in London. He was a great poet. He had come to attend the Round Table Conference. I was invited to a dinner arranged in his honour. I went for the dinner. He said that he was a Brahmin? Why was he a Brahmin? Because his forefathers were Brahmins. Where did they live? In Kashmir. He said he belonged to Kashmir and was a Brahmin who was converted to Islam. They were all converted to Islam not recently but long ago. But they had Brahmin blood and Islamic culture in



them. So Iqbal said that religion did not teach us to hate one another. Afterwards he wrote many other things but that is another matter. Now Iqbal is no more. But let us learn at least this much, that our religion does not teach us hatred. That is why I would like to call upon you to be human. If we become human, we raise the stock of India. Today we are bringing the country down. God forbid that we should bring about India's downfall.

[From Hindi] Prarthana Pravachan—I, pp. 360-5



5. SPEECH OF, OCTOBER 1, 1947

NEW DELHI,

October 1, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

A lady writes to me in a letter that she is desirous of doing service and her husband also wishes to do the same, but no one shows them the way. There are many people who pose such questions. I have given only one reply to all of them and it is that the scope for Government jobs is very limited whereas the scope for service is immense. Hence there is no need to ask anyone what should be done. Anyone who wishes to serve can do so. But we have become so helpless that we have to consult others. Shall I then tell you what they should do? After all, how much reputation does Delhi enjoy for being clean city? There are so many camps here, and I know how clean they are. People fall ill while they are there. It is equally filthy where there has been bloodshed and destruction of property. The Delhi Municipality has never been known for cleanliness. Had Delhi been a clean city the hearts of the people would have been clean too. Wherever we may be, if we keep our places clean, it will have its impact on the whole city. Let every man keep his own house, his own heart clean. I will tell that lady that if she is really keen to do service, not in name but in the true spirit of devotion, then there is ample scope for service in Delhi. She need not inform me anything about her work either. If she can work to clean the hearts of the people of Delhi, clean the hearts of all refugees here, then she will have done a great thing, and then, she and her husband will become an ideal couple. Others will start following their example.

I have just received two telegrams. One of the telegrams which is from a Muslim friend states that Indians used to be considered very sensible and that Hindus and Muslims were supposed to be living in amity. But now what has gone wrong that they cannot sit together and are fighting with each other, indulging in mutual killing and behaving as savages? Let us take the example of Delhi. The Hindus and Sikhs of Delhi are willing to accept the Muslims in their fold provided they declare their loyalty to the Indian Union. Those who wish to remain in the Indian Union, whether it is I or you or anybody else, have got to abide by this. This condition is applicable not only to the Muslims but to everybody. Then, the Muslims possess plenty of arms. Quite a large stock of these arms has been recovered. But not all arms have yet been surrendered.



Searches are going on with the help of the police. But everything cannot come out with the help of the police. So, if they are honest at heart and do not wish to fight against India, they should be loyal to the Union. They should even fight any Muslim power attacking India. And if they do not wish to fight against India, why do they need the arms? There are very few Christians here, but they too would have to fight on behalf of the Union in the event of a war with another country like Germany or any other Christian country and will have to remain loyal to the country. If the Muslims are loyal and they have no intention of fighting against India, why do they need the arms? They must voluntarily surrender their arms. This is all very well. But the way this was said contained poison. Today there are nearly 50,000 Muslims in the camps. We have driven them out of Delhi. Some have been killed. However brave a person may be, he does not welcome death. Somebody may want to do business or something else. He takes comfort in the fact that he will at least be alive. Where could they go after running away? So they have taken shelter in the Purana Quila, and on the grounds near Humayun's tomb. They get wet in the rain and have to face a lot of hardship. They are not able to have proper medical aid also. Dr. Sushila Nayyar gives me the report of their condition. She gives them four hours every day. There are many pregnant women among the refugees. Those women have to be delivered, for which some nurses are required. Also some medicines and many other things are needed. All these things take time to arrange. Why are those people living in such a condition? The Hindus say they have driven them out and they have done nothing wrong in doing that. They say that they can be brought back provided they become loyal to the country. I say that they can be brought back only when their hearts become clean. Granting that the Muslims are not loyal to the country and they refuse to surrender arms, does it mean that they should be slaughtered? There are 400 to 450 million Muslims in India. Out of these, suppose one lakh or even one crore have hidden arms in their houses. Is your army, your police, not powerful enough to unearth those arms from their houses? The police does not belong to the British nowadays. You must realize what would be the outcome of slaughtering the Muslims, killing their children and their women. I have already told you that we have fallen. We became an independent nation on August 15 when we celebrated our Independence Day. For a few days after that we all lived like brothers. Everything seemed well at that moment. But today we have forgotten that we are brothers. If they are killing us, the blame lies with the Muslim League. There was anger at heart. But in the glow of independence we forgot that they were our enemies at one time. I witnessed this in Calcutta. That was the condition all over the country. But



that spirit disappeared later and they were ready to slaughter the Hindus and the Sikhs and drive them away.

I have already said that along with those two conditions if we add one more condition, we can carry on our work in peace. That condition is that we shall not take the law into our hands. It is not up to us to punish them. We admit that we had lost our senses. I agree that the Muslim League was the first to be unreasonable. As I have already said, let us show goodness in a greater measure than they do. But if we try to compete with them in wickedness, it would bring about our downfall as well as theirs. If they are doing wrong things our Government will set it right. If any of our people are in Pakistan, whether Hindus, Sikhs or Christians, who are in a minority over there and are not well protected, if they are slaughtered and their daughters are kidnapped, if they are being deprived of their property or forcibly converted to Islam, our Government will take up the matter with Pakistan. Who are we to retaliate? I begin to think that there are some amongst us who are really murderers. I do not quite know who they are, but they are definitely there, and are working to carry out preplanned murders, arson and forcible occupation of buildings. I do not know where they are but if they do these things, that is sure to bring about our downfall. That is why we have got to admit that it is foolishness [to retaliate in this manner]. Let us rid ourselves of that unreasonableness and bring back the people who are there. The Government has to see that Pakistan requests all those to come back who have suffered in Pakistan and who have been ruined. And all those who have their properties in Lahore should get them back. They have to be returned the houses which have been confiscated. What wonderful buildings I have seen there? And what about all those educational institutions for girls? Nowhere in India are there greater educational facilities than in Lahore. Lahore used to lead in the field of education. Where is that Lahore today? The Government at Lahore has played no part nor given any financial aid in building all those institutions. The people of the Punjab come of a sturdy stock. They are business-minded and produce wealth. There are great bankers there who know how to spend money as well as earn it. I have seen all that with my own eyes. They have built all those buildings, all those colleges for men and women, and then all those grand hospitals and they should be returned to them. A whole caravan extending to fifty miles is moving on. Those people are in a bad state. We stop being barbarians if we pass on the responsibility of taking counter measures to the Government. I have already told you this. I have received a telegram from the Muslims living abroad.¹ They ask why people have lost their reason. They say that we should all live like brothers.



They say that even though they are Muslims they do not wish to fight— Islam does not teach that. I have already said that you should wake up. And let me tell you that you may or may not accept what I say, but I do not wish to be a witness to these things. I do not wish to see such a downfall. My only prayer to God is that He should take me away before that happens. If the situation does not improve, the terrible fire raging in my heart will consume me. My heart tells me that I shall gain nothing by seeing such a thing. I tried to sacrifice my life for India's freedom. I did not lose my life; but freedom came. But what is the point of remaining alive to see this happening in the wake of freedom? So I pray to God day and night that He should take me away. Or He should give me the power to extinguish this fire.

There is a hospital in Delhi where a large number of wounded Muslims are kept. Not all the inmates of that hospital are Muslims. There are some Hindus too. Somebody assaulted and tried to kill those Muslims. There is some group which has come from a village. The members of the group attacked not from the doors, but from small windows and fled after killing four or five patients. I do not know of a greater act of barbarism than this. Such a thing does not happen even during a war. Often hospitals have been bombarded during wars but such a thing has never happened.

And let me tell you another thing. When a train arrives five persons fling a man out of the window as if he were a piece of luggage. He is bound to die. This is what happened today but what I said about that hospital happened yesterday, or maybe the day before yesterday. Who should hang his head in shame for that? You and I and all Hindus must hang our heads in shame. I understand Muslims also are accused of similar crimes. Let the Government demand an explanation for what is happening in West Punjab.

[From Hindi] Prarthana Pravachan—I, pp. 365-70



6. SPEECH OF, OCTOBER 2, 1947

NEW DELHI,

October 2, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS, A Sikh gentleman came to look me up today. He said that somebody had remarked to him that it was all right that I had narrated the words of Guru Arjun Dev, but what did I have to say about the changes made in those words by Guru Govind Singh? History says that Guru Govind Singh was a born enemy of the Muslims. But there is no reason to believe in any such thing, because the 10th Guru almost repeated the words of Guru Arjun Dev. And as for Guru Nanak, he recognized no distinction between the Hindus, the Muslims and the Sikhs. It is all the same whether one worships in the temple or says namaaz. If a Brahmin offers puja, it does not mean that the person belonging to other religion curses God. Instead the Muslims say namaaz. Puja and namaaz are one and the same. All human beings are the same, though their languages are different. Guru Govind Singh has said that all human beings are essentially one and their manifestations are many. If that is so, I believe that we are all one and also many. Though we appear different we are essentially one. There are crores of individuals but they have the same human nature. Guru Govind Singh has said that there is “the same air, the same body, the same word.” Then he says that whether called a god or a demon, a Yaksha or a Gandharva or a Turk, they are only different forms. That is exactly what Guru Govind Singh says: “There are many forms to be seen but in essence they are the same.” Words mean the speech. And speech is only one. And the sun is one. Can you say that there is one sun for the Muslims and another sun for us? It is the same sun for all of us. He says the air and water are also the same for everybody. The Ganga as it flows does not forbid a Turk from taking its water. Nor do the clouds that shower water say that they are bringing water not for the Muslims or the Parsis but only for the Hindus. It is not as if the Union Government was meant only for the Hindus. That can never happen. Whether you mention the Koran or the Gita or the Puranas it is all the same. Only the forms are different. If you write in Arabic you say it is the Koran. And then you write in Sanskrit or in the Devanagari script but if you understand well what is written, you will find it is the same thing. So he ends by saying that we are all one. That is what Guru Govind Singh has taught. I told the gentleman that even if Guru Govind Singh had been an enemy of the Muslims, it was a wrong thing. In the event of war both the Hindus and the Muslims died and got wounded. But a sensible disciple of the Guru Saheb supplied water to the



soldiers who were alive. He gave water to the Hindus, the Muslims and the Sikhs. He said it was the teaching of Guru Maharaj that there were neither Muslims nor Sikhs nor Hindus; they were only human beings and whoever needed water had to be provided. Surely Guru Maharaj did not say that if the wounded person was a Hindu he should be given medical aid and if he happened to be a Muslim he should be left unattended? He said that Gururji had fought against the Muslims. So he did, but he fought against those Muslims who had abandoned the path of justice, and who had given up their religion. He was a man given to charity, he was unattached, he was an incarnation of God. For him there was no question of whether people belonged or did not belong to him. But there is no doubt that he did defend himself and he did fight. It would be a mistake on the part of Sikhs to claim to be non-violent. They keep kirpans. But Gururji taught that the kirpan is meant for the protection of the innocent. It is meant to fight against the tyrant who harasses people. The kirpan is not meant for killing old women. It is not meant for killing women and children, the innocent who are not guilty. That is not the function of the kirpan. The kirpan would be thrust into the belly of one who is guilty whether he is a Muslim or anybody else or even a Sikh whose guilt has been proved. The way people pull out their kirpans these days is an act of barbarism. It would not be wrong to deprive these people of their kirpans, because they have given up their religion. The Sikhs have abused the kirpan.

Today is my birthday.¹ I do not celebrate my birthday in the usual way. I would say that on this day we must fast, spin and pray. That, in my view, is the most appropriate way of celebrating one's birthday. For me today is the day of mourning. I am surprised and also ashamed that I am still alive. I am the same person whose word was honoured by the millions of the country. But today nobody listens to me. You want only the Hindus to remain in India and say that none else should be left behind. You may kill the Muslims today; but what will you do tomorrow? What will happen to the Parsis and the Christians and then to the British? After all, they are also Christians. They have faith in Christ and are surely not Hindus. At present we have some Muslims in our midst who belong to us. If we are ready to kill them, let me tell you that I am not for it. Ever since I came to India I have made it my profession to work for communal harmony, and I wish that though our religions are different we may live in amity like brothers. But today we seem to have become enemies. We assert that there can never be an honest Muslim. A Muslim always remains a worthless fellow. In such a situation, what place do I have in India and what is the point of my being alive? I have now stopped thinking about living for 125 years. I have stopped thinking in terms of 100 or



even 90 years. I am entering my 79th year today; but even that pains me. I would tell those who understand me—and there are quite a few who do understand—that we should give up such bestiality. I am not worried about what the Muslims do in Pakistan. It is not that the Muslims become great by killing the Hindus they only become brutes. But does it mean that I should also become a beast, a barbarian, insensitive? I would stoutly refuse to do any such thing and I must ask you too not to do so. If you really want to celebrate my birthday, it is your duty not to let anyone be possessed by madness and if there is any anger in your hearts you must remove it. I would appeal to the people not to take the law into their hands but leave it to the Government to decide the issue. If you remember this much, I would consider it a good act on your part. This is all I wish to tell you.

[From Hindi]

Prarthana Pravachan—I, pp. 371-4



7. SPEECH OF, OCTOBER 3, 1947

NEW DELHI,

October 3, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

I find satyagraha being carried on in many places in the country. I really wonder if what people describe as satyagraha is satyagraha or duragraha. What is happening in the country is that people talk of one thing and act quite to the contrary. Today every employee, whether belonging to the Post Office or the Telegraph Office, or the Railways or to the Indian States, must examine wherever he is trying to offer satyagraha, whether it stands for truth or untruth. If it is for untruth, there is no need to offer it and if it is for truth it should surely be offered under all circumstances. Whatever is done with a selfish motive cannot be called satyagraha. That would be like insisting on untruth. I have explained quite a few conditions for satyagraha. I have said that two things are essential in satyagraha. One is that the point on which we insist should be truth and another that our insistence should be necessarily non-violent.

Those who are carrying on satyagraha today should act with due deliberation. If the basic thing is not truth and there is recourse to force in pressing for the demand, then it would be well to give it up. If the thing is poisonous, if it is duragraha and an untruth and if we go on demanding what we possibly cannot get, then let me tell you that we cannot remain non-violent in making such a demand. This cannot be non-violence, it is only violence. It is impossible that anyone should make an unjust demand and at the same time claim to be nonviolent.

If I am in charge of the refugee camps I would tell the people living in those camps that they must clean their places themselves. Should they only play cards and dice and gamble or simply remain idle? I know there is not enough food and water for them. But if for that reason they start refusing to do any work, they will fall a prey to vices. And then there are not just half a dozen persons in those camps. Thousands are living in those camps. No one can say when they will be able to return to their homes. We shall certainly provide food for them; but let them at least do some work to earn it.

They can start by cleaning their camps and then offer to do other jobs like spinning, weaving, carpentry, smithery, tailoring, etc. There are plenty of things one



can find to do in India. These people may have been millionaires yesterday; but today they have lost their millions. Such things happen often in the world. Then it becomes necessary to begin afresh and start working. If somebody comes and says that he was once a millionaire and cannot work, all our plans will be upset. We cannot then succeed. Very respectfully I would like to say that we cannot proceed that way. Whatever work we carry on should be ideal from every point of view. It should be clean and there should be nothing shoddy. Let me tell you that our difficulties are likely to be solved to a great extent if people do their own work. And if we get absorbed in our work our anger will also subside. The desire for revenge in our hearts will also die out. Goodness lies in recognizing evil as evil and then meeting it with goodwill. Therein lies the good of the country. We will not inflict suffering on anyone but will try to make others happy by undergoing hardships ourselves. If we do this, we shall be acting not only for the good of India but of the world. Today the world is watching how India is conducting herself. Now is the real moment of our test. We have attained independence. What are we going to do now?

[From Hindi] Prarthana Pravachan—I, pp. 374-6



8. SPEECH OF, OCTOBER 4, 1947

NEW DELHI,

October 4, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

How can I convince you that all these things that are happening today would not have happened if we had not lost our heads. I have no doubt about it at all. Because the Muslims have lost their senses, the refugees are fleeing Pakistan. Why should the Hindus leave that country if they were comfortable there? Why should they run away from West Punjab? It is indeed tragic that people are running away from other parts of Pakistan as well. We should give thought to why the Hindus are running away. Suppose that the Muslims there have become tyrants, should we, in turn, become tyrants too? Should we take the law into our hands and kill the young and the old, women and children because the Muslims are killing them there? I have repeatedly stated that that is the law of the jungle. I cannot remain alive while such a law prevails. So far I had been praying to God that He may keep me alive for 125 years so that I could render some more service to the country. And I can rest in peace only when the Kingdom of God, Ramarajya, prevails in the country. Then only I can say that India has become truly independent. But today it has become a mere dream. Let alone Ramarajya, at present there is no rule whatever in the country. What can a man like me do under these circumstances? If this situation cannot be improved, my heart cries out and prays to God, that He should take me away immediately. Why should I remain a witness to these things? And if He wishes that I should remain alive, I appeal to Him at least to grant me the strength I once possessed. I used to take pride that I could convince the people. Formerly when I went to the people and warned them against doing something, they listened to me. Such was their love for me. I would not say that people love me less today. But whether it is more or less it should be followed by action. And it is action that is lacking. Hence I would say that my influence is on the wane. My work went on well while we were in bondage. But I am not able to do anything now when we are independent. I could teach the same lesson to our people today which I did then. If you can heed that advice today, we can go very far.

What I wanted to tell you was that for you the days of winter are coming. As for me, you see this shawl brought by these girls lest I catch a chill. I have got some cough too. But there is much improvement and this cotton wrap is sufficient for the time



being. But what about all those refugees in the camps and in the Purana Quila? You can ask why you should give [blankets] for the Muslims, but I cannot think that way. For me Muslims, Sikhs, Parsis, Christians are all the same. I cannot make any distinction. What will happen to all those people in this winter? If you tell me that it is the job of the Government to give them blankets, I would say that the Government cannot do so. The Government will make all efforts, but where is the stock? From where will the Government produce the blankets? It is not true that it can easily procure them. Today things are not available even in Europe or in the United States. Nobody can send us anything from there. Even if someone sends ten or twenty thousand blankets out of pity, what purpose will be served by them? We have to provide blankets to lakhs of people. How can everyone get it? I would like to tell all those who are present here that it is not proper that all those people should suffer the rigours of winter. At the same time you cannot pass on all your blankets to them. But I know there are a number of people among us who have many more blankets than they need. There are a large number of poor people in Delhi who can hardly afford to have blankets. Give as many blankets as you can spare. You can start giving things like this from today. You should not wait and think that since the Government is doing something you need do nothing. The cold has already started though it is still bearable. But when I had gone to the Viceregal Lodge after [September] (The source has “October”.) 17, I found the fire already ablaze in the fire-place. That was because it had already become cold and Delhi winter is such that it is more than one can bear. The cold increases rapidly from October onwards and becomes severe. November, December, January and February, are the pleasant months of winter. Those who have plenty to eat and piles of clothes and who can go about heavily clothed, can wear boots and socks, can afford to call the winter months pleasant. But I am a witness to what happens to those who do not have these things. You too may be a witness to that. Hence I would say that we should try to save as many of such people as possible. It is possible that those who have clothes for winter may not have woollen blankets. Even if there are no woollen blankets there may be at least some quilts. A thick cotton sheet is good enough. If it is in good shape you can bring that too. Even a thick, heavy sheet used in olden days, can serve the purpose. A thick khadi sheet would do. I do not want any other clothes. It may be a woollen wrap, or a quilt or a thick khadi sheet—let me have whatever you can easily spare. You must give these things on your own. If you start sending things, somebody will be in charge of collecting them. I am not going to take charge of them personally. Nor will these things rot in the godowns or be



delivered to undeserving persons. I assure you that whatever wraps and clothes you give will go only to the deserving men and women. I do hope you will not tell me that you are giving these things for the Hindus or the Sikhs. Human beings are all one. Let on one come and tell me later on that these things are not to be given to the Muslims. A large number of Muslims have been killed here and many have fled. We have driven them out. I do not know what property remains in the possession of those who have been left behind. If the Muslims remaining in India send the blankets to me and insist that they should be given to the Muslims I will give them to the Muslims. But I hope that all those who have been hearing my words and are going to hear me on the radio will not embarrass me. Let them rather tell me that they have dedicated those things to God. In that case, they will go to the deserving people. I hope and trust that you will do this much. If you do it, I will say that you have done a great thing. But do not send dirty and torn things that I may have to wash and darn. If the clothes are dirty, try to wash them before sending. Take that much trouble. There is no need to send them to the dhobi. You can wash them in plain water and bring them to me nicely wrapped. I shall be very glad if you should do that.

[From Hindi] Prarthana Pravachan—I, pp. 367-80



9. SPEECH OF, OCTOBER 5, 1947

NEW DELHI,

October 5, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

Let me first say something about my health because today also there is a mention in the Press about my illness. I do not know who has sent out that information. It cannot be by the doctors who are always around me. But innumerable visitors come here and see that I am having cough and occasional fever and they make mountains out of molehills. Why? I think they write about my health because, the Mahatma that I am, the news is spread throughout the world. What will happen if Gandhi dies? If everyone has to die, Gandhi has to die too. Nobody has come to this world with the gift of eternal life. I do have some cough and weakness. But what is the point in giving publicity to these in the Press? Let me tell you that those who gave out that information have done no good to me or to anyone else. As you see, I come here and also talk. Nothing comes in the way. I do hope people will refrain from doing any such thing.

The next thing is that I had requested (Vide "Speech at Prayer Meeting", 4-10-1947.) you yesterday to spare, if possible, blankets, quilts and such other coverings which will be useful in winter, which is fast approaching. Three persons have sent blankets today. Two of them are living in the nearby areas. I have forgotten their names, though. The two blankets sent by them are in a fairly good condition. There is another person whose name also I have forgotten. He has given ten blankets that can only be new. All these blankets are kept in safe custody as I told you yesterday. They will be given to deserving men and women. I hope that if you are convinced by what I have told you today you will give me whatever you can spare.

I have just received a telegram sent jointly by many persons. The telegram is lying right before me. I am not happy about the contents of the telegram. Of course they have every right to send such a telegram. The senders of the telegram say that if the Hindus had not behaved the way they did, I too would not have remained alive. This is a very serious thing. I acknowledge no other power except God that can keep me alive. I can remain alive as long as He wishes and no one can kill me till that moment. What is true for me is true for everybody. Why then should they write such



a thing? I must admit that they have been inspired by love to write what they have written. But I firmly believe that God alone can keep me or anyone else alive.

These people proceed to say (they also mention some names which I want to omit) that I am too naive to continue to have faith in the Muslims. Not just one person but a large number join together to tell me that the Muslims are going to betray at the last moment. They say that they are going to side with Pakistan and fight against India to support Pakistan. They say that 98 out of every 100 Muslims are traitors. Let me tell you that I do not hold this view. These 4.5 crore Muslims, most of whom live in the villages and a few in the cities, have become Muslims from among us and they all cannot be traitors. Should we enter the house of each Muslim and finish him on the presumption that all Muslims are traitors and disarm each one of them? Their suggestion only implies that Muslims should all be finished or driven out from here. I would tell those friends that this is cowardice. I would stress only this, that supposing they are all like that, then prove it to the Government. Tell the Government to settle the matter. If we followed the suggestion of these friends the two communities would remain enemies, and the result would be only war. If both the sides insist on fighting, both are going to be destroyed and the freedom we have achieved will be lost. No Hindu can preserve his Hinduism by being servile to others. While the British were ruling over us we thought that our religion was being preserved. But that was a mistake.

When I was a child I read a poem by a very great poet who was blind. “Well, let us forget our animosities and live in peace, for, now, the British have come.” There was a time when we were fascinated by the British and felt ourselves safe under their protection. Let us rectify that mistake. Now if we become such cowards as to think of driving away 4.5 crore Muslims we will only prove ourselves to be feebleminded. We will not save our religion by following such methods. I do not believe that Hindus and Muslims are born with a feeling of mutual animosity. If we become enemies, how can India survive? Are both Hindus and Muslims going to be enslaved again and are they going to forget their religions? How is it possible? It is our duty to furnish all the relevant information to the Government.

Let me tell you today that I meet and keep in touch with the Ministers. Panditji visits me almost every day. The Sardar also pays me almost daily visits, though not as often as Panditji does. But both of them come. They are both my friends and are with me. Both of them have even differed from me in all earnestness. I do not mean to say



that I shall not be able to tell them anything. The Government has to protect all—Hindus, Muslims, Parsis, Christians. Then only can they claim to be true Congressmen. The function of Hindu Mahasabha is to protect Hinduism. It is their job to protect the religion of the Sikhs and the Hindus and to overcome the forces of evil. Who else is going to do it? Can religion ever be saved through anybody's favour? If we ask someone to save our religion, we are only bargaining. We say all this because we want to save ourselves. We may wear one robe now and another the next day. Does that mean that we are following any religion? That is why I say that these people who have sent me the telegram have not done any good.

Next I want to talk about something else. Mr. Churchill has repeated his earlier view¹ in an exaggerated manner. That pains me. That is because I am a friend of the British. I have no feeling of animosity towards anyone. Several among the British are very nice people and they have acted courageously in granting freedom to India. I don't care what result this may have later on. Mr. Churchill assails this action and says, as he had said in his earlier speech also, that he has always held the view that the Indians are what they are. If he had known it all along, where was the need to repeat his view?

But he seems to have attacked the Labour Government only in the interest of his own Party, so that the Labour Government should fall and his own Party should return to power. It is the working class that is ruling Britain today. Britain is a small island; but it has progressed so much on the strength of its working class and industries that it has become renowned in the world. Mr. Churchill aspires to overthrow the present Labour Government in that country. In order to pull down that Government he points out that the Labour Government has done a foolish thing and behaved in a clumsy manner and ruined the Empire. He says it is a folly that Britain should have lost India and now the same thing is going to be repeated in Burma. How can I tell Mr. Churchill that we are too familiar with British history, how they acquired Burma and how they consolidated their power in India. I do not think anyone can be proud of such a history.

What we are doing today is sheer savagery. We are trying to destroy the freedom we have won. I admit that today I am useless in your eyes. I have no influence on you. Nevertheless, let me tell you that if the British people listen to Mr. Churchill's words and the Conservative Party defeats the Labour Government it would be a great misfortune. Let me tell you that the whole world says that we have become free



through some power. What is that power? It was the working class that was in power at the time Britain had a Socialist Government and that Government granted us freedom. Who can wipe out socialism? Neither Mr. Churchill nor anyone else can do so. I have come to realize that their Government cannot function in any other way. Supposing the British nation loses its salt and the working class is defeated and Mr. Churchill comes back to power, would he give us an ultimatum that he is going to enslave us again, and attack us? Let us see how he does it. For the life of me I cannot think how he can ever do it. The people of our country may be anything, good or bad; they may become scoundrels or lose their heads. But they alone have taught me that freedom is the greatest thing. In such freedom you are entitled to commit all the mistakes. It is not that freedom is given to us when we are good and may be taken away from us when we cease to be so. How can one talk like that? That was not the law for the British people. It was not the law for the other nations of the world. If freedom was meant only for the good, looking at the things happening in the world how would one find freedom anywhere? It is the British themselves who have taught us that freedom is preferable to slavery. A British writer has said that the British would choose to remain free even if they were to just drink and rot but they would not like to be reformed under slavery. But we in India accept their bad points and not the good points.

India has seven lakh villages. Today the people of these seven lakh villages have not run amuck. If the people of these seven lakh villages went mad, the map of India would be completely changed. I would however be happy if even though they should go mad, they remained free. But if, anybody casts an evil eye on India and tries to subjugate her because our people have gone mad he is not going to succeed.

I have already told you that even if we continue to be crazy the British are not going to return. They cannot come back. Once they have thrown out something, are they going to swallow it back? But the world is watching all that is happening. How will the world react when it sees what is happening here? The world will not allow such a thing to happen to India. Nor will India allow it to happen. But if other powers under the U. N. O. come here for investigation, we will not be able to stop them. If then we continue to be mad and lose our heads we will lose our freedom to them.

Even if I am the only one left I will continue to warn the world that it may completely destroy us if it so wishes, but it can never enslave us again. It is my vow



never to be a slave again. It is for all of you to adhere to that vow, to make it a reality. I alone cannot do it. I cannot save India single-handed.

How can I be sure about myself? Who can say how long I am going to be alive? How is India going to be affected if God takes me away? How can I save India all by myself? It all depends on God. If He is by my side and is merciful, India can be saved. I think that so long as I am alive, nobody can take advantage of the disturbed conditions in the country and say, let us enslave it and capture it. I only wish that God may fulfil this desire of mine through you.

[From Hindi] Prarthana Pravachan—I, pp. 380-5



10. SPEECH OF, OCTOBER 6, 1947

NEW DELHI,

October 6, 1947

Those who ought to know all about our food problem have gathered together on the invitation of Dr. Rajendra Prasad to give him the benefit of their advice on the grave food crisis. Any mistake made on this important matter may mean avoidable starvation and death of millions therefrom. India is not unfamiliar with starvation and death of tens of thousands, if not millions, due to famine, natural or manmade. I claim that in a well-ordered society there should always be pre-arranged methods of successful treatment of scarcity of water and food crops. This is, however, not the occasion for describing a well-ordered society and for showing how it would deal with the matter. Our concern, for the present, is to see whether we can, with a fair hope of success, deal with the present food crisis.

I think we can. The first lesson we must learn is of self-help and self-reliance. If we assimilate this lesson, we shall at once free ourselves from disastrous dependence upon foreign countries and ultimate bankruptcy. This is not said in arrogance but as a matter of fact. We are not a small country dependent for our food supply upon outside help. We are a sub-continent, a nation of nearly 400 million. We are a country of mighty rivers and a rich variety of agricultural land, with inexhaustible cattle wealth. That our cattle give much less milk than we need is entirely our own fault. Our cattle wealth is any day capable of giving us all the milk we need. Our country, if it had not been neglected during the past few centuries, would today not only be providing herself with sufficient food, she would also be playing a useful role in supplying the outside world with much-needed food-stuffs of which the late war has unfortunately left practically the whole world in want. This does not exclude India. The distress is growing instead of showing signs of decreasing. My suggestion does not include ungrateful rejection of free supply that any foreign country may wish to offer us. All I say is that we must not go begging. It demoralizes. Add to this the difficulty of internal transport of food-stuffs from one place to another. We have not the requisite facility for rapid movement of grains and other food-stuffs from place to place. Further add to this the remote possibility of delivery of uneatable stuff. We dare not lose sight of the fact that we have to deal with human nature. In no part of the world is it to be found perfect or even very nearly so.



Next let us see what possible foreign aid we can get. I am told that not more than three per cent of our present wants. If this information is correct, and I have had it checked by several experts who confirm the figure, I am sure the case for reliance on outside help falls to the ground. The slightest dependence on outside help is likely to deflect us from exploring to the fullest extent our immense internal possibilities in the shape of utilizing every inch of arable land for growing crops for daily food in the place of growing money crops. We must reclaim waste land which is capable of being placed under immediate cultivation.

Centralization of food-stuffs, I apprehend, is ruinous. Decentralization easily deals a blow to black-marketing, saves time and money in transport to and fro. Moreover the villager who grows India's cereals and pulses knows how to save his crops against rodents. The movement of grain from station to station makes it liable to be eaten by rodents. This costs the country many millions and deprives it of tons of grain, every ounce of which we badly need. If every Indian were to realize the necessity of growing food wherever it can be grown, we should most probably forget that there was scarcity of food-stuffs in the land. I have by no means dealt fully with the fascinating and absorbing subject of growing more food, but I hope I have said enough to stimulate interest and turn the wise towards the thought of how every individual can help in the laudable enterprise.

Let me now show how to deal with the three per cent of grain we might possibly get from outside. Hindus observe a fast or a semi fast every eleventh day each fortnight. Muslims and others are not prohibited from denying themselves, especially when it is for the sake of the starving millions. If the whole nation realized the beauty of this partial self-denial, India would more than cover the deficit caused by the voluntary deprivation of foreign aid.

Personally I hold that rationing has very limited use, if any. If the producers were left to themselves, they would bring their produce to the market and everyone would get good and eatable grain, which today is not easily obtainable.

I shall close this hurried review of the food crisis by drawing attention to President Truman's reported advice to the American people that they should eat less bread, and thus save the much-needed grain for starving Europe. He added that Americans would not lose in health by the recommended act of self-denial. I tender my congratulations to President Truman on this philanthropic gesture. I must decline to endorse the suggestion that at the back of this philanthropy there is a sordid motive



of deriving a pecuniary advantage for America. A man must be judged by his action, not the motive prompting it. God alone knows men's hearts. If America would deny herself for the sake of hungry Europe, should we fail to do this little act of self-denial for ourselves? If many must die of starvation, let us at least earn the credit of having done our best in the way of self-help, which ennobles a nation.

Let us hope that the Committee that Dr. Rajendra Prasad has called together will not disperse without presenting a work-able solution of the food crisis that faces the country.

Harijan, 19-10-1947



11. SPEECH OF OCTOBER 7, 1947

NEW DELHI,

October 7, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

In my speech yesterday there was no mention at all of what is going on between Hindus and Muslims these days. But today something has happened and I should not keep quiet about it. It has happened not here but at Dehra Dun. A Muslim gentleman was murdered. As far as I know, he had committed no crime. Nor had he taken the law into his own hands. But he was killed because he happened to be a Muslim. I was pained about it and wondered where we would stop if we went on at this rate. Today I find that I have a large number of Muslim friends. I feel hesitant to tell them to leave this place. How would they go away? I find that today the Muslims are not safe in the trains. Anyone who so pleases throws them out of the compartments or slaughters them. I understand that a similar thing is happening in Pakistan. But what are we going to gain by continuing to behave in this manner? Let us at least know ourselves. Let us at least recognize our religion. Everyone follows his own religion. What does our religion teach us? Or are we acting without any regard for our religion? Has the Congress lost its senses? After all, what did the Congress do for 60 years? If the Congress has been making a mistake so far, it is the enemy of the country, and I would say that it should be removed from the scene. Let even those who profess to be Congressmen say it in clear terms that they are leaving the Congress and forming another party. There is no room for any complaint about it. Do whatever you like but this much I can say before the whole world and our people that we should not take the law into our own hands. If we do it, we shall be driving ourselves to ruin and lose our independence and then, if some other power comes and subjugates India, we shall realize with shock what a terrible blunder we had made. This is not a good thing. There was a mongoose which killed a snake to save a child. Its mouth was smeared red with blood. The child's mother had gone to the well to fetch water. When she returned, the mongoose rushed to her jumping as through saying that it had saved her child. But she thought it had killed the child and threw the pitcher on the mongoose. The water was gone, the pitcher was broken and the mongoose died. When the woman entered the house she saw the child playing in the cradle and the dead snake lying nearby. Then she realized that the mongoose had been her friend. She felt sad and remorseful. So



let us not do anything which we may regret later like that mother, and feel sorry for not having co-operated with our Government. We have set up our own Government. Are we going to ruin it?

Today we have got power in our hands. We have got our own ministers. Our Prime Minister is Jawaharlal. He is a true jewel and he has served his people well. Then there is the Sardar and there are others too. Is it that we do not like them? Today it is said Jawaharlal is no good. It is said he is not a good Hindu. People want a person who will follow their dictates, who will not support the Muslims and will drive them out. I must admit that Jawaharlal cannot do so. Nor can I do so. I consider myself a sanatani Hindu. But I am not that sanatani who would not let anyone except the Hindus live in India. Whatever the religion one may follow, one belongs to India if one is loyal to the country, and is as much entitled to live in India as I am. It makes no difference if one belongs to the minority community. That is what religion teaches me. Right from my childhood I have been taught that in Ramarajya or the Kingdom of God no person can be unworthy just because he follows a different religion. You must realize that I am such a Hindu. I have no power in my hands and I am not a minister. Jawaharlal is a minister and you can remove him if you want. Then there is the Sardar. Do you know who he is? He is the Sardar from Bardoli. Do you listen to him? He also has many Muslim friends. His friend Imam Saheb was the Congress leader in Gujarat and he is dead. Imam Saheb's son-in-law (Ghulam Rasool Qureshi) is at Ahmedabad and I think he is the chief of the District Congress. He is a very goodhearted man. I know him very well. He married Imam Saheb's daughter (Amina). It is the same Imam Saheb who came away with his wife from South Africa, leaving his business there, and stayed with me. He is dead and his grown-up daughter is left behind. Should I discard her and tell her that I have nothing to do with her because she is a Muslim? She is a Muslim no doubt, but I can say that she is a good-hearted girl. She does not know that she might have to leave. If the Sardar lets her go, where is she going to stay? Let us not take the law into our own hands. Law may be made by the Sardar or Jawaharlal, but they cannot just issue ordinances and then leave the matter to the public. Today we cannot have such ministers. Granted that that was done during the days of the British. But does it mean that we should do so even now? Shall we invite the same criticism about us which we used to fling at the British? We will not tolerate it. That is all I want to say.

[From Hindi] Prarthana Pravachan—I, pp. 389-91



12. SPEECH OF, OCTOBER 8, 1947

NEW DELHI,

October 8, 1947

A gentleman often comes to see me. He is a good man. He was travelling from Dehra Dun. The train was quite crowded. At one station (I forgot the name) a man entered their compartment. All others in the compartment were Hindus and Sikhs, some carrying swords and some carrying knives. They gave the newcomer a close look. They asked him who he was. That poor man was alone and he replied that he was chamar. But those people were suspicious. When they examined his hand they found his name tattooed there. Sometimes people have their names tattooed on their hands. And thus he proved to be a Muslim. Somebody drove a knife into his body and as the train approached the Jumna he picked him up and flung him into the river. The whole thing was done by only one man, but all those other men also witnessed it. The gentleman who narrated the incident to me could not bear the sight and turned his face away. I told him that if he had so much pity in his heart and he did not like the man being killed, why did he not stop the offender from doing such a savage act? There were some fifty or sixty Hindus and Sikhs in the compartment and the victim was a helpless Muslim among them. What kind of humanity is it that someone should kill such a lone man and throw him in the Jumna? That man was not even completely dead. He had been stabbed and wounded and he was just thrown into the river. If the gentleman who came to me had so much pity, why did he not intervene and why did he not save him from death? He told me that though he felt distressed he failed to do his duty. He said he could not think of doing anything. I told him that was not a good thing, that was not human. We are so many and if a solitary Muslim comes in our midst we kill him and throw away his body. Anyone who tries to do such a thing should be restrained and persuaded with love that he should have mercy. He should be told: 'What are you doing? Whom are you killing? Don't kill him, he has not done anything.' And if this had no effect, I would be happy if the gentleman had sacrificed his life in saving that Muslim. What is so great about fifty or sixty persons killing a single man? But there were so many people present and one of them decided to kill a man and actually killed him while others looked on, who probably approved of the act. Let me tell you that those who are given to this way of thinking are mistaken. In the midst of those who kill there are also those who do have pity in their hearts and do not approve of killing, but because they are afraid for their own lives they do nothing and forget



how they should act on such occasions. But how can one forget? If somebody indulges in an act of savagery, you must stop him. How very shameful that even the people who do not approve of such savagery merely look on? I want to tell you this because I have seen with my own eyes that there are people who do not approve of such things but do not have the courage to come forward and intervene. I will appreciate if there is even a single individual who shows the courage to stand up and prevent such an act saying that he would hold the hand of the offender if he tries to strike and if the offender does not listen, would sacrifice his own life, rather than let the victim be killed. A man like me would stand by non-violence. He would not kill even if he had to die himself, instead he would save a person's life by laying down his own. I have no doubt that that man would have been saved if somebody had shown such courage. And if, in an attempt to save, he himself had got killed, he would have proved himself truly brave. This is true non-violence. True non-violence does not mean that we remain non-violent before the strong and use force on the weak.

We used non-violence against the British, but now we are resorting to violence. Against whom are we using violence? Against our own fellowmen. The non-violence we used against the British was not the non-violence of the brave. The country is facing the consequences now. I am facing the consequences. So are you. I must admit that I could not teach you true non-violence. I am showing you what the non-violence of the brave can be. There are Muslims living here today. And there in Pakistan the Muslims are ill-treating the Hindus. But should we, in turn, ill-treat the Muslims? Are they behaving particularly like brave people? Let me tell you that what is happening in Pakistan is deplorable, and if we are going to follow it in our Union it is equally deplorable. And then arguing about which side was the first to take the offensive and which committed more excesses than the other is not exactly the way of establishing friendship. The true way of friendship is that we should always be on the side of justice and maintain our good behaviour. If we follow that path, even the savage and those who may have lost their senses will come round. We don't want to go into the question of who is more guilty and who less, or who started it. In my view that would be sheer ignorance. That is not the way of becoming friends. If those who were enemies till yesterday want to be friends today, they should forget the past enmity and start behaving as friends. What is the point of remembering animosity? There can be no friendship if people think that they would be prepared to fight if necessary but would remain friends if they could. That is not how true friendship grows.



Now I may as well talk a little about another point. The Press has become a very powerful medium in the world today. When a country becomes independent the Press becomes all the more powerful. When there is freedom, there can be no restrictions on the Press regarding the reports and the news to be published. But public opinion can be very useful at such times. When the newspapers do dirty propaganda or publish unfounded reports or incite people, the Government should come down on them to put an end to these or take legal action against them. But in doing so the riot situation worsens and there is more trouble. The Government cannot resort to that course. Things were different during the days of the British. What did they care? They caught hold of a man like Tilak (1 Bal Gangadhar Tilak was deported in 1908 for writing two articles in Kesari. Vide "Sentence on the Great Tilak", 1-8-1908.) and put him behind the bars for six years. He had written something in his paper. It was nothing much. Still he got six years' deportation and had to complete the entire term. Like him many people had to go to Jail. I was also jailed for six years. (Gandhiji was sentenced to six years' imprisonment on March 18, 1922, but was released for health reasons on February 5, 1924.) It is another matter that I did not remain in jail for six years. But I was sentenced to six years because of an article I wrote in Young India. I did not write anything bad, but I was sentenced. Now such things cannot happen when we are free. Today all the correspondents, editors and owners of newspapers must become truthful and serve the people. No false information should appear in the newspapers nor should they publish anything that would incite the people. Today, when we have become independent, it is the duty of the public not to read dirty papers but to throw them away. When nobody buys those papers they will automatically follow the right path. I feel ashamed at the fact that today people have got into the habit of reading dirty and undesirable things. Such newspapers are widely circulated. I read about an incident at Rewari. A newspaper published a report saying that the members of the Meo community killed all the Hindus, set fire to their houses and looted their property and cattle. I was shocked to know that the Meos had indulged in such terrible things. The next day there was no information about Rewari in the papers. It was all a cooked-up story. I wondered how that news about Rewari ever came to be published in the paper. I would like to say that the man who wrote about the Rewari incident should give an explanation. He must explain whether he had written that story on wrong information or it was deliberate mischief. He is guilty of great crime before God. Such a thing should not have happened. If anyone behaves that way, our work can never progress. The Government cannot keep a watchful eye on the Press today. You and I should keep a watch on the newspapers. Let us purify



our hearts and show no inclination to take in dirty things. Let us give up reading dirty things. If we do this, the newspapers will do their duty properly. I shall finish after discussing one more point.

Our military and police also are in the same position as the Press. The military and the police were divided at the time of the Partition. I admit that it was not their doing. It just happened like that. The military here is composed of Hindus and Sikhs. The Muslim soldiers have gone over to Pakistan. If the Hindu and Sikh soldiers and police start thinking that because they themselves are Hindus and Sikhs they will only defend the Hindus and Sikhs and try to cover up the crimes committed by them and refuse to protect the Muslims because they are not meant to protect them, we shall be nowhere. Nor would it be any good if the Muslim army and the police started killing the Hindus saying it was not their business to protect the Hindus. The Government has the military and the police. But I need neither the military nor the police. I would ask the people to become the military and the police for us. If the Hindus kill the Muslims here they have got to be saved. We must not give up. I shall not step aside even if I have to lay down my life. Such will be my Government. I am not talking in the air. I am telling you what is right. I would like to say the same thing to the army and the police which belong to the Government. Their primary duty is to protect the handful of Muslims living here. If they are attacked by the Hindus and Sikhs, they should come to their rescue. They should protect them even at the risk of their own lives. Then only can they be called true soldiers and policemen. The freedom achieved by India is indeed a remarkable phenomenon. The whole world says and I say it too that no government has ever transferred power to the people of any other country in this way. We have attained our independence without any fighting and bloodshed. Hence our military and police should not be there to fill their pockets. They should be content with what they are getting. They should not think in terms of extravagant meals complete with sweets. A soldier must satisfy his hunger with whatever meagre meal he may be getting and perform his duty. But if he starts thinking about other people's children going to schools and colleges, and about their cars and cycles and decides to resort to corrupt means to get similar thing for himself, he will cease to be a true servant. That is why I say that a true soldier and a true policeman is the one who is satisfied with whatever food he gets and does his duty without any religious bias. If he is a Hindu he should never think of harming the Muslims. It is a different thing to apprehend a Muslim and have him punished if he is guilty of a crime. But should an innocent Muslim be punished here because the Muslims elsewhere are guilty of grave



crimes? If a Hindu harms a Muslim, it is the duty of a policeman to protect the Muslim. I must say that a policeman who acts in this manner is true to the Indian salt. If our military and police do not behave thus, they are not true to the salt of their country.

I will say the same thing about the military and the police in Pakistan. But I can do nothing about the situation there. To whom should I address my words? But I have no doubt that if things happen here as I have suggested, similar developments are bound to take place there. Today the people have lost their balance. They say, when their own brethren are being ill-treated in Pakistan, why should they not retaliate here? But it is not human to say such a thing. Hence so long as I am alive I shall proclaim at the top of my voice that we must keep ourselves pure, we must be good, our newspapers and our military and police should remain good. Without this our Government cannot function and we shall be ruined. We must remain civilized, whatever happens in Pakistan. Even if they turn mad, we have to remain good. So, under any circumstances, we have to remain civilized. Do at least this much. If you do not listen to me, let me tell you that we are all going to be ruined.

[From Hindi]

Prarthana Pravachan—I, pp. 391-8



13. SPEECH OF, OCTOBER 9, 1947

NEW DELHI,

October 9, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

Every day I keep talking about the same thing in one form or the other. I am feeling helpless. I continue to be here merely for that work. I must thank you for your generosity and goodness and for hearing me patiently. I can only thank you. But with me it is not the end of the matter when I say something and you listen to it patiently. That does not satisfy me. So many of our people are in a sad plight. There is plenty of land here. What should we do for them? What is the duty of those people? What is the duty of the Government? We must understand the people who are creating a kind of unhealthy atmosphere and we must try to dissuade them from doing so. My voice will then reach even those who are living in other places.

Some harassed people came to see me. They are all nice people, belonging to West Pakistan. They came to me ten or twelve days ago. At first I requested them to give me everything in writing. They gave a written statement so that I might do something about their problem. They said unless some arrangements were made for the Hindus in Pakistan to come over to this side, they would not be able to leave that country. They say that there is danger on the way. They have food grains but how can they bring their stocks with them? Who will allow them to carry foodgrains? For the present they can be brought here only by air or by road. The train journey is very difficult these days. The trains are not running as they used to. What has been the fate of those who have not been able to come, nobody can say. Under these circumstances, they say, it will be better if they can come away. As for me, I am wondering what is our position and where we are going.

Now let me turn to Bengal. I have done considerable work there too. I have worked in East Bengal as well as West Bengal. I had gone to Noakhali (On November 6, 1946) in East Bengal which is now in Pakistan. I travelled long distances on foot there. I visited different places every day. I talked to the local people. I tried to remove fear from the hearts of Hindus men and women. I could do it only with the help of Ramanama. While reciting the name of God if somebody kills us, let us be killed. Why should we be so much attached to life? Should we give up Ramanama for the sake of



remaining alive? Should we give up the name of God out of fear? Should the women who are accustomed to putting kumkum marks, stop doing so? Women in that region, if they are not widowed, wear bangles of shell. That is a symbol of their married status. Widows do not wear bangles. Should they, out of fear, give up wearing bangles even when they are not widowed? When I found those women hesitating to wear the shell-bangles as an auspicious mark, I persuaded them that they should not discard their bangles. They were convinced and assured me that they would wear the bangles again. Now I hear that people are slowly coming away. I did not know about it. My own people are there. Perhaps I have told you that all my good co-workers are there. Pyarelal, people from the Khadi Pratishthan, Kanu Gandhi—are all there. Many capable persons, including Satis Chandra, are there. They are all trying to build up the morale of those people. In spite of that people are running away from there. No doubt they must be facing many hardships there. But what is the point in running away from there? Where will they run away and what will they do? Let them consider this point. Here in Kurukshetra we have 25,000 refugee men and women. Some women are pregnant. It is no wonder that some of them die, because, in any case, who is there to treat and nurse them? There is no accommodation and people feel distressed for they had to flee from the Punjab. I am therefore thinking what advice I should give them. The number of refugees who are still there is much larger than those who have arrived. We can convince them and take care of them if they are in tens or twenties, or even some lakhs. But their number goes into several crores and they are spread over this vast country. It is not a small matter transferring these people from one place to another. They are facing such hardships that they die before their time and are starved to death. The Government cannot provide everything to everybody even if it tries hard. The Government has its military and police forces. But all these cannot be used as they were during the British days. Nor should it be so. The army can carry on its functions only with the help of the people. If the people wish, they can be the hands and the feet of the Government. The Government cannot do anything unless the people cooperate with it. I am telling this to the Ministers also. As I see, the Government is not shirking the responsibility. I meet the Ministers almost every day. Let me tell you that they too are upset and disturbed. But what could they do? After all, they have no experience of running a government. They ran the Congress organization. But it was only an organization of a handful of people. All the persons whose names were on the Congress register never gathered together. And the workers in the office were small in number. They had to work with limited resources. Today they have to work for



crores of people. Crores of rupees are there and thousands and thousands of people have to be looked after by a few officials.

How can the work be done? It is to be considered how these 25,000 people can get their food in time. Thousands of people come into the country daily, and they remain hungry. They do not have enough clothes to wear and the winter is round the corner. The situation in Pakistan is the same as here. It is not as if it was heaven for people in Pakistan and hell for those who are here. Or, one may even say that it is not as if it was heaven here. I see this with my own eyes. Nor can it be said that it is all hell in Pakistan. After all, there are human beings living in both the countries. Some of them are good and some are wicked. But who would determine how much goodness and how much wickedness exists there and here? And what would we gain by it? The greatest question before me is, and it should also be the question before you, that of giving all possible protection to the people who have already come or want to come. But with regard to those who have come we should try and see that they return to their homes. Let me tell you that they must go back to their homes. I know that those who were living in villages will not like to leave their places. Even if a villager owns an acre of land, he will make any sacrifice to preserve it. If people migrate by thousands and millions, where can they be accommodated and how can they live? They are dying on the way. That is why I say that even if we have to die, we should continue to live wherever we are. We shall see what happens later on. It is not as if God will not protect us if we live in Pakistan. God is always there to take care of us. And then, there is the Government to take care of us even if there is no one else.

I just mentioned that all my coworkers are in Bengal. Let the West Bengal Government report to the East Bengal Government about the situation obtaining here. But even there, in fact everywhere, people do not follow the instructions from their Government. Even officials do not follow the instructions from their Government. They have become so arrogant that they think that now that independence has been achieved there is none to question them. The British, whose mere frown used to frighten them have already gone. Now what has happened? I am a witness to their being afraid of the British. But now if everybody starts thinking that there is no one to question him, that he is his own general and police, that he has attained freedom and he can do as he pleases, let me tell you that things cannot go on like that.

If both the Governments are anxious to do justice, that will encourage [the people] to do something. But what will happen if the Governments do not wish to do



justice? What will be the outcome after all? I am not a man keen on fighting. I may run away from fighting. But those who have weapons, the police and the army, will naturally want to fight. What else can they do? I can do nothing. But those who can do something must necessarily do what they want to do. Then there will have to be a war. People who share my creed, wherever they are, cannot go on living in distress. We shall have to do something. This I am saying with regard to both the Governments. It is for both to do something. One who is a tyrant has no right to punish another tyrant. When a Government does not or cannot protect its people well, how can it challenge another Government for the same fault? How can anyone ever do such a thing? I can understand if we die fighting for justice and our Government has to go in the process. But should we run away from there out of fear and die as we flee? Half the people die on the way and the remaining reach here. But where to accommodate them? How are we going to feed them? Should they simply stay here doing nothing? If not, they will have to be provided with jobs. When crores in our country are starving and crores are unemployed and we are able to do nothing about them, how are we going to find jobs for those who are coming from outside, not from outside the country but from another province? How will they find their own occupation here? What will they do and how? That is a great problem which creates ill feeling. This ill feeling will not be there if my suggestion is accepted. Then people will become courageous. They will master the art of dying. If they learn the art of dying, they will be doing good to us and the world. If we can convince India about the solution I have suggested it will be to the benefit of all. If we become brave, I have no doubt that the whole world will admire us.

[From Hindi] Prarthana Pravachan—I, pp. 398-402



14. SPEECH OF, OCTOBER 10, 1947

NEW DELHI,

October 10, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

Today also I have received quite a few blankets. Some persons have even given some money. I have received a telegram from Baroda saying that they can send quite a few blankets from there. I think they have said that some 800 blankets are ready but the railways people are not in a position to accept the consignment. It is true that there is so much pressure on the railways today that everything cannot be accepted. If possible I shall secure instructions from the Government so that the blankets may be brought. Then we will have sufficient stock of warm coverings. We do not have enough woolens just now. But I hope that God willing we shall somehow have enough things to go by and no one will have to shiver in cold.

A lady sent a ring to me a little while ago. Just now I can use that ring only for buying quilts and blankets and shall try to do so.

Now we have before us a grave problem about which I have talked enough. We are facing food shortage and that creates a lot of trouble. We have won our independence no doubt, but with the coming of independence our troubles seem to have multiplied. I feel that if we can digest true independence we should not be faced with such troubles. How should truly free people behave? Ours is such a remarkable freedom that to win it we did not have to fight like soldiers. We did have a fight of some kind, but it was fight which the whole world admires. When we have won our independence through such a struggle it must mean a great deal to us. But we do not value it so much. That is our weakness. I have made (Vide "Speech at Prayer Meeting", 6-10-1947) a very simple, practical suggestion about not importing food grain. But I find that people are shocked by such a practical suggestion. Why? They say they are accustomed to importing grain. True, we have got into that habit. But it is not a very old habit of many years. It cannot be said that it is our habit to eat only when somebody feeds us. It is impracticable that we should go on issuing permits for whatever quantity of food grain can be provided. But my suggestion is absolutely practical. And what is there to be upset about it? India is vast country inhabited by hundreds of thousands of people. We have got sufficient land, and by the grace of God, sufficient water. I



know there are certain desert areas in the country where water is not available. But it cannot be said that water is not available anywhere in India. When we have so much water, land and a population of millions why should we be afraid.

All I want to say is that people should realize that they have got to produce food grain by their own labour to satisfy their hunger. That would electrify the atmosphere and that zeal alone would solve half the problem. It is said, and rightly, that people die more through fear of death than by real death. There was a man who started thinking that he was going to die very soon. Why talk of some other man—take my own example. If I started thinking that I was going to die because I had a cough, what would happen? I shall die only when my time is up. That is in the hands of God. But if I start worrying about it right from now imagining myself on the point of death, it is dying without actual death. And being in such panic about death daily I would be creating trouble for people around me as well as for myself, and would be squeezing myself out day after day. I would be always lamenting about the approaching death. The better thing would be to take it easy till the moment of death and convince ourselves that there is no one who can kill us except God. He will take us away whenever it pleases Him. If we give up the fear of death our problems will also leave us, and we will be free of our troubles. I tell you, when we do this we shall not be troubled. Nobody should think of getting food through anybody's favour. Instead we should produce our food by our own labour. That is why I say that we should not die except by natural death. Let us give up this business of issuing permits and rationing which is the method of killing unnaturally. This much with regard to the food problem.

The same is true about cloth. I have already said that we can have four times more cloth than is available now. Why should there be a shortage of cloth in our country? I am absolutely certain that there should be no shortage of cloth in India even if there may be some shortage of food. Why? Because India grows much more cotton than it needs. There are many people in India who can spin and weave cloth for their own requirements, and easily wear clothes made by themselves. And thus we become truly independent as regards food and cloth and then do not have to depend on mills. At present we are not free in this sense, and if it is so, it is the result of our own ignorance. I had hoped that we would achieve such self-sufficiency. Those days are gone when I used to go round the country propagating khadi. I used to ask women to spin as much as they could. And they did spin, but it was without realizing its implications. They were not bothered about the wages. They spun and produced cloth.



But now the picture is different. Today you do not have cloth. I say that we should produce cotton for our cloth, spin it and get it woven. There is no trouble weaving cloth for one's own requirements. But even if people don't do that they can certainly buy cloth from a shop. The Government can buy cloth from the mills and then distribute it to the people. Apart from this, those who can manage should take a vow not to buy cloth for a month or two. Let them buy khadi for their use and avoid buying chintz and cloth of fine varieties. When we don't buy cloth for a certain period, it does not mean that we will go naked. If we produce enough khadi in the meantime, we shall have solved the problem of protecting ourselves in winter. Here it is not the question of making blankets and such other things. The question is only of making enough khadi cloth for our personal use, and not buying from the market. If we do this much, prices will at once come down. Today prices of cloth have also gone up. Prices of all commodities are going up. But we do need some yards of cloth to make shirts, kurtas and other things. Let us buy khadi cloth for that purpose. As I have already said the idea thing would be to produce that much cloth ourselves. Let us decide not go to the shops. If we take a vow not to buy any cloth for a few months, let me tell you that the trouble will be over and we will be self-sufficient in the matter of clothing and food. Another advantage in my view is that it gives a feeling of self-confidence to the people and they become self-reliant and cease to be worried by shortage of cloth. They feel confident that they can produce their own clothing and their own food. If we do all this, the result can be great. We have become free, but only politically. The economic condition of crores of our people has not improved. But we do not realize this. We will realize it when we know that we are producing our own food and demand any price for it we want. We shall know it when we produce enough cloth to meet our needs. We have got enough cotton. We can even procure it from the mills. We should realize that it is not possible to have all our cloth from the mills. But let us at least know this that we will not have to face any hardships. Then we can be at least economically free, and even the poor will feel that they have become free. Let us do this much and the consequences will automatically follow.

Today we are engaged in fighting among ourselves; but we can fight only when we have time to fight. But when we are occupied in work and all of us become workers, we will have no time left for quarrels and fights. We have got provision for food and clothing. Let us give up the habits of drinking and gambling. If we proceeded thus step by step in the right direction we would have no shortcomings left in us. We would on our feel that we do not want to fight. There would be no question of anyone being a



Hindu or a Muslim. If anyone created trouble we would face it bravely. We would fight with him if we wanted to. But why should we die today under unnatural circumstances?

That is why I have tried to impress upon and convince you of this and if it appeals to your hearts, and we decide to follow it up in action, we shall rise very high and we shall not have to look to others for help. Whose help do we need? It is God who is going to help us. And whom does God help? God helps only those who are willing to help themselves.

[From Hindi] Prarthana Pravachan—I, pp. 402-7



15. SPEECH of October 11, 1947

NEW DELHI,

October 11, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

Today is the twelfth day of the latter half of Bhadrapad. In Gujarat, that is, in Kathiawar and Cutch, the day is known as Rentia Baras. On this day people's attention is drawn towards the charkha and allied activities. People do not give up once they start on something, but today I think the atmosphere is unfavourable for an enthusiastic celebration of *Rentia Dwadashi*. I have given a wider interpretation to the charkha and India has accepted it as a symbol of non-violence. Today that symbolic meaning is lost. Had that meaning been retained, we would not have witnessed what we see today. Even then let me remind you of that meaning. It was enough that my birthday was celebrated on October 2. But for the past many years my birthday has been celebrated according to the Hindu calendar also and the days in between are utilized for plying the charkha with great zeal. But today I do not find the atmosphere for it. Even so, if by the grace of God some regard the charkha as a symbol of non-violence it would indeed be good. It would be gratifying if even five persons take it as such, and still better if a crore do so. But even if there is one such person it will be good. That is why I have drawn your attention to it.

There is Mandal Saheb in Karachi who is a Minister in the Pakistan Cabinet. It is said that he is a Harijan from Bengal, but the Qaid-e-Azam has given him a place in the Cabinet. On his suggestion something was accepted. Some two or three others whose names I have forgotten also support his view. It is not possible for all the others to be with him. But what does it matter if even one or two are supporting him? A circular has been issued that all the Harijans in Sind should wear a badge round their arms, with the words indicating that they are untouchables, so that no one should harass them and throw them out. According to me the logical result of this would be (it would be fine if it was only my suspicion) that all those Harijans would for the present get employment, but later on if they stayed on there (all of them are not going to stay there; some have already left and some are going to leave, according to reports I have received from many letters) they would have to embrace Islam ultimately. If this is to be the result, it would be a dangerous situation. If any person wants to give up his religion and accept some other religion and thinks he is doing a good thing, he is



entitled to do so. Today I regard myself a sanatani Hindu. Tomorrow if I start disliking sanatana dharma I am free to give it up. But this is a very serious matter. Who can stop me if I do not accept my religion? I am not tempted to become a Christian in order to improve my economic condition or gain some other advantage. I will have settled my accounts with God and would act in accordance with my conscience even if the world protests. I believe that no Harijan has any such conviction. I can say this with authority because I have become a Harijan, an untouchable, and I have accepted their religion. I expect that as far as the Harijans and others in Pakistan are concerned, it should be declared that they are safe. Then there would be no need for anyone to put on a badge. It should be declared in respect of all that, even if any individual says he has changed his religion of his own accord, his conversion will not be considered valid. Religion is a matter of the heart. It is between a man and his God. But under the present Government in Pakistan no one can claim that he has changed his religion of his own free will. It is understood that anyone doing so has done it from fear or compulsion. That is why the Pakistan Government has to declare that there can be no conversion.

Then there is one more thing. There are going to be two festivals this month. One is Dussehra, which is a great festival. The Hindus all over India celebrate this and attach great importance to it. But it has a greater significance in Bengal. I know this since I have stayed in Bengal. Exactly two days after this, comes Bakr-Id. In former times there was not so much ill feeling amongst Hindus and Muslims. They did not fight as they do now, though there used to be some mutual bickering. Even the British Government had to be prepared in case something untoward happened on that day and Hindus and Muslims clashed. Any provocation was possible, like slaughtering the cow or taking the decorated cow in procession to provoke the Hindus. On the Dussehra Day everything is decorated, music is played and men and women wear gay dresses, some go in carts and some ride horses. But it can be a provocation for the Muslims and provide a ground for clash and then the Bakr-Id Day would similarly provide a ground to the Hindus. I would say that those Hindus and Muslims who wish to live together as friends are duty bound to exercise restraint when they celebrate these festivals. They should do nothing that may provoke the other side. Even without that our hearts are full of anger at present and our reactions are exaggerated. Under these circumstances, we should not do anything provocative.



While departing the British Government has done one thing wrong. They divided the country and now there are two Governments. Today they are like enemies. Maybe they will never fight. But events are following such a course that it is difficult to predict the future. But let us hope that sanity will prevail on both sides. But if this does not happen we may lose our independence. Letting the country be enslaved will be betraying one's religion. It would be a grave mistake to surrender our freedom. It is my prayer that God may grant wisdom to all of us and all of us should be purified. That would be a good thing. One more thing I would like to say is that our countrymen in South Africa may be careful when they carry out their plan in their struggle.

[From Hindi], Prarthana Pravachan—I, pp. 407-10



16. SPEECH of October 12, 1947

NEW DELHI,

October 12, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

Today also quite a few blankets have been received. As for the quilts I may say that they are being made by the mills as well. Those quilts too will be arriving. From the way blankets and quilts are coming, I have started hoping that the people who have been put here, that is, in Delhi and its neighbourhood, will have no trouble during winter. Arrangements are also being made to reach blankets, quilts and warm clothing to the needy. One thing should be remembered that the blankets that are being received will wear out in the end, but just now they can give protection against rain and dew. But the trouble with the quilts is that it will not be possible to save them from rain. God willing, it may not rain during the winter, but the dew is inevitable. Everybody may not get a blanket. I even doubt if there will be enough tents to accommodate all. I had mentioned one thing while talking to some people, and I want to mention it here too. Those who get the quilts can protect themselves against the dew if they spread newspapers on the quilts. Then the dew will not pass through. Another remarkable thing about the quilts is that the amount of cotton used for making them gives sufficient warmth. When cotton breaks and forms into lumps the quilt can be opened up, the cover washed and the cotton used again after carding. With this the quilt becomes a new piece. It is a very useful thing for those who use it carefully.

A great calamity has befallen us. But those who think of God and work in the name of God find something to learn even from such a calamity. Two things are possible. One thing is that a person gets panicky or becomes enraged in the face of a calamity, and makes himself more miserable. But even in the midst of trouble if he thinks that he is having trouble for no fault of his own and yet he is never going to give up God and is always going to seek His help, he can create for himself happiness even in the midst of misery. Many of the people who have come as refugees here were well-to-do. They had lots of money and other property. They had big mansions, now all lost and gone. I have already said that till the people who have left their homes go back and are able to live in safety they will be a great burden on both the Governments. If we want to survive, if we want to remain free, we shall have to atone for the sin of this



exchange of population. Atonement means making amends for our mistakes. Then only would it be true expiation. It cannot be done in any other way. When somebody really rectifies the mistakes he may have committed, he has done sufficient expiation. If we mean to correct our mistakes, then the people who have come here to save their lives must be in a position to go back. This may happen when the time comes, but what will you do in the meantime? I wish to suggest that in the meantime if good doctors are available—among the refugees there are doctors, lawyers and many others—they should give medical service and those under them also do the same, they can render really great service and even from these troubled times we can learn a new lesson.

When I went to visit the refugees I was told that 75 percent of them were businessmen. It was a shock to me and I wondered how so many traders would be able to do their business here. Millions of traders have arrived here and if all of them start doing business all at once, everything will be in a mess. If they decide to put in some effort, learn to do something new, then it will be somewhat better. Let those traders who were earlier engaged in business forget their past. It is a rule in the world that when we cannot get one particular thing, we must look for something else. Let us not sit idle, or waste time in gambling and drinking. We have got to do some work. Let us work hard. Those who are businessmen but are able bodied and can use their hands and feet should do some work. There are quite a few jobs that do not require any particular training. Let them concentrate on such things and cooperate with one another. At the same time let them develop an attitude of working together. Then out of this hellish situation which has been created for us, we shall be able to create heaven.

I had decided to tell you about all this and thought that today I would explain everything in detail and through you convey it to everyone. The refugees and also the country would derive great benefit from it. And then, out of the misery that has befallen us we shall create happiness.

In this connection I want to say what we should do about the quilts we have not yet received but are going to get from various places. What shall we do about them? The cloth used in the quilts can be removed and washed if it has become dirty. The cotton can be kept back. Cotton does not get spoilt at all. It can be dried and cleaned with hand. We do not even need a carding-bow. It is another matter if we want to use that cotton for spinning. That cotton can be easily used for making new mattresses or quilts. I think if we make these things ourselves, they will be made cheaper and



quicker. There is enough cloth lying with the mills. I do not wish to discuss the food problem at this stage. There is enough stock of cotton out of which quilts can be made in a short time. If these quilts are given to the people they would have protection in winter. These people must be taught how to prepare these things and given hope in the midst of despair which surrounds them. There is a bhajan which says that hope springs from unending despair. This is true. It is a poetic expression. We desire to have a glimpse of hope concealed in the deepest despair. What should we do to have that glimpse? The people who have been thrown on the streets must first realize that they belong to India, not to the Punjab or the North-West Frontier Province or Sind. All those provinces are in India and so the people from those parts also belong to India. They can become and remain Indians only on the condition that they are not a burden on others. Just as milk becomes sweet when you add sugar to it and then you cannot separate sugar from the milk and the milk remains what it was, they too should mix and mingle with people wherever they go like sugar in milk and not quarrel or nurse hatred towards each other. They must be mutually helpful and co-operative and put in hard work. Then they can reform the province where they go and the people belonging to that province will say that they are willing to accommodate any number of such persons.

It is my hope that those among the refugees who are able to work and whom my voice can reach must persuade others to be good men. They should not be a burden anywhere but should live, as I have said, in amity and mutual adjustment. They should not cheat anyone. We should not waste our time. Let every moment of our time be dedicated to God, work and service. We were born to serve. If we live like this, we will forget that we were once plunged in misery and sorrow. There are millions of people around. Let them engage themselves in service. We were born to render service. Let us resolve to raise our country high, not bring it down. I think it will be a blessed moment when we realize this and then there will be no need to worry about anything. We may make mistakes. To err is human. But it is also human to correct the errors. When we rectify our mistakes, we become truly human.

[From Hindi] Prarthana Pravachan—I, pp. 411-4



17. SPEECH OF October 13, 1947

(Since Gandhiji was observing silence his written speech was read out after the prayers.)

NEW DELHI,

October 13, 1947

Yesterday I made some remarks about the refugee camps which were missed in the English condensation. Let me extend them this evening as I attach great importance to them. Though we have our fairs, religious and other, and have our Congress sessions and conferences, as a people we are not accustomed to camp life strictly so called. I have attended many Congress sessions, conferences, and other camps. I attended the Kumbh Mela of 1915 at Hardwar and had the privilege of serving in the Servants of India Camp together with my co-workers who had returned from South Africa. Though I have nothing to record except kind personal attention to me and mine, my observation of the camp life our people lived is none too happy. We lack the sense of social hygiene, the result being dangerous insanitation and dirt with the attendant risk of outbreak of infectious and contagious diseases. Our latrines are generally beyond description. Absence of this class of provision is perhaps an apt description. People think that they can perform these functions anywhere not excluding even the much-frequented banks of the sacred rivers. Spitting anywhere without the slightest consideration for the neighbours is almost accepted as a right. Nor are our cooking arrangements any better. Flies are everywhere welcome companions. We forget that they might have sat a moment ago on any kind of dirt and thus might have become easy carriers of infection. Accommodation is not always planned. This is not an exaggerated picture. I must not omit the babble of noise one has to tolerate in these camps.

For method, planning and almost perfect sanitation, give me a military camp. I have never recognized the necessity of the military. But that is not to say that nothing good can come out of it. It gives valuable lessons in discipline corporate existence, sanitation, and an exact time-table containing provision for every useful activity. There is almost pin drop silence in such camps. It is a city under canvas brought into being inside of a few hours. I would like our refugee camps to approach that ideal. Then there is no inconvenience, rain or no rain.

These camps become quite inexpensive provided that all work including the building up of this canvas city is done by the refugees who are their own sweepers,



cleaners, road-makers, trench-diggers, cooks, washermen. No work is too low for them. Every variety of work connected with the camp is equally dignified. Careful and enlightened supervision can bring about the desirable and necessary revolution in social life. Then indeed the present calamity would be turned into a blessing in disguise. Then no refugee will become a burden wherever he goes. He will never think of himself alone, but always think of the whole of his fellow-sufferers and never want for himself what his fellows cannot have. This is not to be done by brooding but by prompt action under wise supervision and guidance.

Blankets and quilts continue to come. Soon it will, I hope, be possible to say that there will be no dearth of this protection against the coming winter.

Harijan, 26-10-1947



18. SPEECH of October 14, 1947

NEW DELHI,

October, 14, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

Today also many blankets have been received. There is an institution called the Arya Kanya Vidyalaya here. Two teachers and some students from that institution came today. They have collected money to buy blankets. How much could they have collected? They got a few blankets. But they told me something which I thought was a great thing and I was happy when they started talking about keeping a fast. I told them that every lunar month has two halves, the bright fortnight and the dark fortnight. If they fix one day in each fortnight and keep a fast on that day, we shall be saving all the food that we get from outside. I consider it a grave mistake to spend money and get food from outside. By observing such fasts we save ourselves from making such a mistake. After they heard my suggestion the teachers of the Vidyalaya had a consultation with the girls. They did not compel anyone. But they decided to keep a fast on every Thursday and give in charity whatever they would be saving thereby. They would try to give whatever they were able to save. They also said that they would grow food on some land they had. They have taken upon themselves two tasks—to eat less and grow more food. I appreciated this much more than the blankets that have come from them. They were followed by the Ambassador of Iran and his wife. They sat for a little while but left behind a big pile of blankets. They wanted me to distribute the blankets if I could. I told them I was a beggar and would receive whatever was available and pass it on to the needy.

Many Sikh gentlemen came to me. They came in two or three groups. I discussed many things with them. There is no point in telling you what I discussed. There was nothing secret about it. But the gist of my discussion which they and all others should well understand is that we are going to achieve nothing by indulging in such mutual fights. Passing judgments, giving punishment, acting in retaliation and so on are the things to be done by the Government. Let us do whatever we can through the Government. I think they were all in agreement with this. The rest of the discussion I shall leave out.



Then I heard another thing. Some people have been arrested. We are having our own Government and if it arrests some people it is free to do so. Quite often it is possible that innocent people get arrested. Our Government should not deliberately make the mistake of arresting innocent persons. Nor should it arrest anyone willfully. But whatever we may do, a human being is a human being after all. He is prone to make mistakes. He is no angel. And he is certainly no God. So he is bound to make mistakes. If by mistake some innocent persons were arrested, what was the need to launch an agitation? But I hear there is some agitation going on against the arrest of some innocent persons. It is for the Government to decide whether or not those persons are guilty. I can understand if some evidence is placed before the Government to establish the innocence of a particular person. But harassing the Government in this manner, getting somebody released by resorting to agitation, is not the proper thing to do. When we fought against British imperialism and were jailed we used to demand the release of the prisoners saying that they were not guilty. That was indeed true. But they were guilty in the eyes of the Government, not ours. In those days we agitated against the British in protest against the arrest of our leaders. But against whom should we agitate now? Our Government in effect is a Panchayat Raj. The leaders represent the Panchayat. It is we who have made them leaders. That is why I say this is not the time to intimidate our Government by resorting to agitations. First and foremost, it is our own Government. It does not have the military strength which the British used to have in India. The British had the entire Navy at their command, because of which it used to be said that they were invincible and unrivalled. It is another matter if that claim cannot hold good today. Whatever it is, they had everything at their command. By dint of that force they ruled over us. Now we are our own rulers. If we know that no other power is ruling over us and those who are ruling over us have been elected by us, we can also remove them. That is why I say that we should not take such an agitational approach.

The next thing I want to mention, about which I have already told you a number of times, is how we can establish perfect peace in India. It is a very complicated problem. I am not all that happy that there is not much trouble in Delhi. There may be stray murders here and there, but it is not a regular feature as it used to be. This is good. The Government can be happy about it, but I cannot. This is because I have not come here to rule. I have stayed on here by sheer coincidence. I stayed here in the hope that I would bring together both the sides which are riven with hatred and would be helpful in doing that. These communities used to quarrel in the past too. But they



used come together once the quarrel was over. But today our hearts are poisoned, as if we had been enemies for several centuries. This is unthinkable. We should not be cowards, neither the Muslims nor the Sikhs, nor the Hindus. Then we would be frightened of nobody. The Muslims should cease to be frightened of the Sikhs and stop running away in fear. The Hindus and the Sikhs should give up fear of the Muslims. The Hindus, the Sikhs and the Muslims should no longer fear one another, if we wish to become a great military power. And, if we choose, India can develop a great non-violent and invincible army. We have two alternatives before us and there is no third way out. The way we are following is no way at all. It is the way of barbarism. There is no way in it to march forward. Thus, I wish to point out the way that can bring us close to one another. The most important thing is that the Hindus, the Muslims and the Sikhs should stop blaming one another as they are doing now. Let them all see their own mistakes and see them magnified like a mountain. The Muslims should not say that even though they committed mistakes at one time, the mistakes the Hindus and the Sikhs are committing today are so great that their earlier mistakes count for nothing. Nor should the Hindus retort by saying that even though they have committed mistakes, their mistakes are nothing compared to what the Muslims have done. What is so very great in answering mistakes with mistakes? If we Hindus and Sikhs try to satisfy ourselves by saying that that has always happened in the world, I would say that it is not the correct way. That way we can never sit together with a clean conscience. Today things have reached such a stage that the Pakistan Government refuses to take in such a large number of Muslims. And then we begin to wonder if this is due to treachery on their part. What treachery could there be? But how does it affect us if it is there and they have some hidden motive? If we do not have enough courage not to be driven by suspicion, we are going to perish. But let me not talk about it. I wish to say only this much to the Muslims, the Hindus and the Sikhs, that they should not even hint at the faults of others. They should only acknowledge their own faults. If we know that we have committed a mistake, we must admit it. I had said yesterday that it is a vicious thing that the Muslims should regard the Hindus as their enemies. If we become such enemies, the result can be only unfortunate. What if Pakistan has come into being? Let us not give way to frenzy. We were enemies till yesterday. Let us be friends from now on. When we become friends, let us say that we were enemies at one time but now we are friends and we have forgotten our animosity. The Government should frankly tell the Hindus, Sikhs and all others staying in the country that it has made some mistakes and they must also realize the mistakes they might



have made. But why should we make any mistakes? We will not do so. If we mutually resolve that we shall have healthy competition and instead of giving two blows for one shall remain calm even in the face of provocation and resolve to remain free from guilt, compete in being good, then let me tell you that all is well with us. And then I can leave Delhi with an easy mind. If I have got to stay on and even die in Delhi, I shall do so. I know how to do it. I have learnt nothing else. We have to die one day in any case. If we cannot do anything, let us at least die. But let us not kill. I am exhorting everyone to learn at least that much. Let us do or die. There is no third alternative. Let us not run away now. We cannot change our fate. We have animosity against none. Nursing animosity is no way of establishing peace in India. Only when we do not quarrel with anyone and abandon all fear can India pave the way to peace. If the Muslims want to live here let them live. Are they going to kill us? How will they kill us and why? Should they all go away from here? Why should they go away and where should they go? Today the people of Pakistan say that they are [not] in a position to absorb so many Muslims. But the Muslims are spread all over India. Pakistan is a small country. How can they all be crowded there? If Pakistan says no more Muslims can be taken in, we shall have to listen. Why should we imagine there is some duplicity involved? In any case, how does it affect us? But let us realize that we have our own fellowmen living with us. If the Muslims are traitors let them be taken to task and treated according to law. Shoot or do whatever else you want if you find someone being a traitor and not being loyal to India. Shoot five, fifty or four crores; I am not bothered. I can at least understand that. But when one man comes and kills another just for nothing, how can we tolerate it? We should not tolerate it. And why should we, on our part, lose our heads? Why should we become such cowards? That is why I have said that if both the Governments have to function peacefully, let us compete with one another in being good. We are not going to win merely by saying that their mistakes are bigger. But we must realize that if we have made mistakes, we must remedy them. When we clear up everything, things will be well. I can talk much more, but it will be enough if you absorb what I have said today.

[From Hindi] Prarthana Pravachan—I, pp. 416-21



19. SPEECH OF October 15, 1947

NEW DELHI,

October 15, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

Many people come to see me every day. Some of them leave with me blankets and money for the refugees. A lady has given me today a cheque for Rs. 2,000. Two people also came to see me on behalf of the Muslims. They have collected blankets and some money which they have passed on to me. They are craftsmen. They have not even given their names. I asked them to distribute those things themselves among their own fellowmen who have suffered. But they said they wanted to hand over the things in Gandhi's hands, because such things should be distributed among the Hindus and the Sikhs who have suffered in West Punjab. I was touched by their sentiment. In the present conditions even if a few Muslims or Hindus or Sikhs do things like these, they must be written down in letters of gold. They said that at one time they considered me an enemy of the Muslims; but now they were convinced that I was a friend to everyone. So am I, and I claim to be one. I do not need a certificate from anyone for that. I have lived in that spirit not for five or seven years but for the last 60 years.

It is generally said that every Sikh regards the Muslim as his enemy and vice versa. But this is absolutely incorrect. It is true that a considerable number of Sikhs went wild, as did a large number of Hindus and Muslims. But for that reason to say that the whole community of Sikhs is like that or that all Muslims are the same is quite unjust. I have with me innumerable instances showing how the Sikhs and the Hindus saved Muslims and the Muslims saved the Sikhs and the Hindus by keeping them in their own houses. Not only from the Punjab and the Frontier Province but from every place such instances have been reported. The newspapers should give proper publicity to these things. Let them give up publishing the news about the Hindus and the Muslims killing each other. That does nothing but harm. The Press has become very powerful in the present world. It can render great service if it so chooses.

One-fourth of the entire Muslim population is concentrated in the U. P. They speak Urdu. If we want them to stay there the Devanagari script should not be forced on them. Malaviyaji too had worked much in the interest of Hindi. But I never heard



him say that the Urdu language should be wiped out. Those who are in power in the U. P. today are big people and they are good workers. They keep the Muslims with them. But if on the one hand we say that the Muslims should not go from here, and on the other hand go on insulting them and try to keep them as slaves, then on their own they will be compelled to go away from here. Should our being in majority make us so arrogant that we would not tolerate the presence of others? We should never be like that. Everybody should learn both the Hindi and the Urdu scripts. If the Muslims want to go away to Pakistan of their own free will, they should be allowed to do so. But we must do our duty. After all, Muslims have left their stamp all over the U. P., and there are grand Muslim monuments in Agra, Lucknow, Deoband, Azamgarh and other cities. There are many nationalist Muslims in those places. Besides, there are many Hindus who know only Urdu. Tej Bahadur Sapru is a great Urdu scholar. Should he be compelled to write in the Devanagari script? Should he be asked to forget Urdu? Are we going to cut off our own hands? If we were to do any such thing, our excesses would reach the limit. I have no doubt that we will not be able to protect Hinduism in this way. We should not follow the example of Pakistan. Hence I call upon the U. P. Government in a spirit of love, even though I have no control over it, to withdraw its circular (1 A report had appeared in the Press that the official language of the U. P. would be Hindi in the Devanagari script.).

[From Hindi] Prarthana Pravachan—I, pp. 422-4



20. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

NEW DELHI,

October 16, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

I have been forgetting to talk about Mysore. You must be aware of what has happened there. Sir Ramaswamy Mudaliar is the Dewan of Mysore. Mysore has joined the Indian Union. The people of that State are well educated. They have resorted to satyagraha quite often. This time too, the people offered satyagraha. They wanted adequate share for the people in the administration. The Prince would remain and the people would be loyal to him; but he should withdraw from administration. This should have actually happened, but it did not. Hence the satyagraha. The people sent me a telegram before launching the satyagraha. They informed me that there was no cause for me to worry. They said they had decided to resort to satyagraha after a great deal of thought and they would strictly conform to the rules of satyagraha. They were ready to face any hardships in the pursuit of their goal. But the Dewan, Sir Ramaswamy Mudaliar, is a very great man. He has travelled all over the world. He realized that the people could no longer be ill-treated. How long could it go on? The result was that all those who had been taken prisoners were released and the issue was settled between the Mysore State and the people. All the legitimate demands of the people were accepted by the State. The ruler, the Dewan and the people should be congratulated on this settlement. The State has agreed to rule with the consent of the people. There are many other such Princes. Let them also follow this example and, like the King of England, rule with the consent of the people. How wonderful it would be if they abided by the will of the people and did not overstep the limit!

Another thing which I want to say is that the place where I stay belongs to the Birla brothers. They allow everyone to come in. We must appreciate their good gesture. Usually lakhs of people attend the prayer meetings. But here the prayer meetings have been small. Actually I did not expect even the present number. Those attending these prayer meetings also include people who came from Punjab. I was very pained to learn that some people picked fruits from the trees around. Nobody should touch a single fruit on the trees. Why talk of fruit, not even a leaf should be plucked. The gardener would not at all like people picking fruits like that. There is a time even for picking fruits. They should not be plucked before their time. People who



come here come to worship. Let our hearts be pure at least during the prayer meeting. During that period we should think of nothing but God. How then can we resort to stealing? It may be that we are all passing through troubled times. But let us not give up our good behaviour.

I have received another complaint too. People keep coming to see me throughout the day. Some of them say that by praising Government officers, the police and the military I have given them a certificate of efficiency. I have not said any such thing. Even if I did, it was a folly on my part or I must have been off my guard. But I have not said it at all. What I said was that they should all rise to the occasion. Not that they have already reached that level. It is one thing to say that a person should have such and such qualities and another thing for him to have those qualities. In any case, since I do not know any of them, how could I give them any certificate? How do I know that they are all working according to the law? Our duty is to abide by the instructions of the police and the military, because they are given a certain authority.

If we wish to have Panchayat Raj the first rule is that we should follow its orders. We have not yet achieved the full benefits of Panchayat Raj. Had we been truly non-violent, this would not have been so. Even so, the British rule has ended. The Governor-General, though he is a high-ranking officer in the Navy and belongs to the royal family, has remained here as our servant. He has to go by the opinion of our cabinet of Ministers. He is not our master. Rather, we are his masters. Thus ours is a democratic government and we must all abide by the laws made by it. If anyone has any complaint against Government officers the remedy lies in approaching Government or getting the complaint published in the newspapers. If any officer has taken to bribery or is inefficient, action should be taken against him. Those who indulge in graft are committing a crime against themselves and against the country. Recently some military officers were found flogging people at the railway station. No officer has a right to flog anyone. But in retaliation if we also start whipping we fall victims to the same evil. Before independence, Government officers used to behave like our masters and not servants. They were loyal to the British Government, and if they took bribes in those days, they were committing a crime against the British Government. But if the officers take bribes now, they are committing a crime against India. There is such a lot of difference in this.

Some people from Noakhali have also come to me. East Pakistan is no small country after all. Places like Dacca and Tripura are in East Pakistan. Those people tell



me that the Hindus in Dacca are fleeing. They fear some atrocities there. Those Bengali friends have requested me to say something. I can say only what I have been saying all along. Nobody should leave his country or his home like that. The brave have nothing to fear. If at all, they are afraid only of God. They should not run away in cowardice. They must have the courage to die. They must tell the Pakistan Government that they wish to remain loyal to Pakistan and stay on there. They must assure it that they will not betray and cut at the roots of Pakistan. They must say that the Government may kill them, but cannot abduct their daughters. If the Government forbids the name of Rama they must insist on uttering that name. If it says they should not beat drums on the Dussehra Day, they must insist on doing so and explain that that is part of their religion. But it is very wrong that influential people run away from there in order to save their lives while the poor, helpless people stay there. There is a large population of Shudras there. How can they be expected to show the requisite courage? If I am a businessman possessing a lot of money, should I run away? That is not my dharma. If the lawyers, doctors, tradesmen, etc., find that they have got to leave their places, they should see that the poor have found their safety first. It is not human to run away leaving the poor behind. That can never bring glory to Hinduism, Islam or Sikhism. Wherever you go, you should always keep the poor with you. Unfortunately I am not in East Pakistan today. God has not given me the power to be present everywhere. I am just a human being and helpless at that. But I can certainly make my voice reach them all, and that I am doing.

Those Bengali friends told me that I should request Dr. Ambedkar to do something in the matter. He has done considerable work among the depressed classes. On this occasion he too should say a few things to the people there. Let him tell them that it is sinful to keep alive at the cost of one's religion. Such words would give them some strength.

I am also requested to send Suhrawardy Saheb over there. It would be proper too that he went there. But Suhrawardy Saheb is not here. He should be here in a day or two. But Khwaja Nazimuddin is already there. He too says that no Hindu or Sikh will be killed in Pakistan. Suhrawardy Saheb too will go there to help him. How can he avoid going there? Today, it is in the interest of everybody that Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs should live in amity. If this does not happen, both India and Pakistan will perish.

[From Hindi] Prarthana Pravachan—I, pp. 424-8



21. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

NEW DELHI,

October 17, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

People write to me and also enquire personally, why my cough is not still cured. Whenever I speak a little after the prayer I start coughing. I am not taking any treatment either from a doctor or a *vaidya*. Doctors tell me that I have allowed it to continue for three weeks while the cough can be cured within three days by taking penicillin. But according to me Ramanama is the greatest medicine. It is infallible. Like the arrow of Rama which never failed to hit the target, this medicine too never fails. But one must be patient. I can think of no other alternative in the present circumstances and in the context of what is happening in Delhi and all over the country there is no other help except God. Whatever I try to do as a human being results in failure. There was a time when my words carried much weight. Today they have no impact. Have I done anything wrong? Or is it that I no longer talk from my heart as I did in former days? But I do speak from my heart and you also listen. But times have changed. Every age has its own feature. It should be so and it is so. But it will not have any effect on me. I do not let that happen. I am what I have always been. I know that I have been saying now what I have said all along. I have the same faith in non-violence and truth as I had before. Maybe, my faith is much deeper now. The times have changed but I have not. Prayer has an effect on those who listen to it in good faith. Man can act only according to his own nature. There is no room for hypocrisy in this.

What I am doing today is in the name of God. I trust Him. Why should I give up Ramanama just for the sake of this minor illness? Either this illness has to go or I have to be overcome by it. What is so very great if man dies? Everyone is ordained to die from the time of his birth. If God wants something done through me He will keep me alive, otherwise He will kill me with this cough. The bhajan which the girl sang a moment ago says that one should repeat Ramanama. One should forget desire, anger, attachment, infatuation, but never forget Ramanama because He is one's sole refuge. It is for one to sing the bhajan and meditate on it. But when I start coughing at such moments, doctors or *vaidas* ask me to take penicillin. Where is Ramanama in this? When I do not have faith in Ramanama regarding trivial matters, how can I succeed in bigger things by relying on it? If I do not put in my own effort I would go down and



become worthless. Others may not take that view, but I would have fallen in my own eyes. Why should I forget Ramanama in order to cure this ordinary cough?

As usual some blankets have been received today also. Some cheques too have been received. With great enthusiasm a Muslim gentleman came and left a quilt containing two and a half seers of cotton. He wants it to be given to someone who had nothing to cover himself with. Arrangements are being made to do that. It is being remarked that things are not being given to the people with as much enthusiasm as would be expected. As for myself I want to express my gratitude to the people that they are sending blankets and money so promptly. Some people send money because they cannot buy blankets at cheaper rates. They want us to buy the blankets at a cheaper price on their behalf.

Rajendra Babu had called a committee to discuss the food problem. The committee did not discuss anything about the problem of cloth. With regard to food and cloth I continue to hold the same views that I have held the past few months. I agree that the poor are put to greater hardship and they would be worse off. Some people write to me and those who are working among the peasants came and told me that the peasants were happy about what I have said. They feel that it would help them to get rid of the controls imposed on them. They would have at least some opportunities. Their granaries are full. Are they going to consume the entire stock of grains? Even if they want to earn money, would they resort to black-marketing? Peasants are simple-hearted people. Why should they resort to black-marketing? They are happy if they get a small margin of profit. What have they got to do with scheming or black-marketing? And so, let me tell you, and through you the Government, that we should have at least that much faith in the people. Why do we not have the courage to scrap rationing? We need not fear any untoward consequences. Why have you assumed that people have become wicked and are hiding their food stocks? After all, you yourselves are the Government. You can again revert to controls if you find that the situation has worsened. There is no justification for making people after if you do not have that much courage. Things should be done according to the practice of Panchayat Raj.

Mill-owners say they have piles of cloth stocked with them. But how can they release it when there is control on it? I do believe that they are not talking about their own profits. They are talking purely in the interests of the people. If they are given freedom they can bring out their stocks and cloth can reach the people. How terrible



it is that there is enough stock of grains in the country but it does not reach the people it should. It seems to me that there is something basically wrong about it. Our bureaucrats wish to work sitting at their desks. They have in front of them their tables and red tape and wax. All that they have to do is to put red tape and make the file. Have they ever lived among the peasants? Have they ever acquainted themselves with the peasants? Very respectfully, I wish to tell them that they should not take it for granted that people will die. With open eyes we see that people are dying because of controls. Those who are given to evil things and acts of madness continue to indulge in their activities, but their strong points are not seen. I would say that both these controls should be removed as early as possible. Even if there are some hidden stocks, people will become vigilant. The soaring prices of cloth, foodstuffs and other things will come down. Now there is no war and nothing is going out of the country. But the prices are still going up. I feel it is most disgraceful and our heads should hang in shame. The Government should trust the people and have courage. It should act boldly and remove controls as early as possible. This is my firm belief which is increasing day by day.

Today we are all agitated. All through the day we fear death at the hands of the Muslims or the Hindus or the Sikhs. We are obsessed by that fear and can think of nothing better. There is animosity between these communities, but we cannot get over it by brooding over it. Our scriptures also say that man becomes what he thinks. The poison spreads in our system. It affects our thought and then the Hindus want to kill the Muslims and the Muslims want to kill the Hindus and the Sikhs. If we continue to think along these lines, it would become our second nature. Are we going to be reduced to this state after attaining independence? I can never call this Panchayati Raj.

I have received a telegram from South Africa. It says that I have done them a great favour. What favour have I done? I have merely stated (Vide "Speech at Prayer Meeting", 11-10-1947.) what I believe to be good. This is one great thing about satyagraha. When the Punjab was under Martial Law, a reign of terror was let loose. Hundreds of thousands of men had to crawl on their bellies. They crawled on their bellies because they loved their lives. I have forgotten the name of that narrow lane in Amritsar. They crawled on their bellies simply in order to remain alive. They were threatened with death if they refused to crawl. But why should anyone do such a thing merely in order to live? They could have stood up and refused to crawl, saying, "Never to accept defeat even if we have to die." (The first line of the verse written by Pandit Rambhuj Dutt Chowdhary,



during the Martial Law in the Punjab.) It is perfectly in tune with the spirit of satyagraha to say that we shall not be defeated even if we have to die and lose all our possessions. This involves truth. A wrong action involves falsehood. What does it matter if there are only a handful of people in South Africa? How can there be millions to offer satyagraha? In any case, the population there is only a few lakhs. Even if a few hundred, even if only ten persons come forward, they will add to the prestige of India. They ask me why I do not also request the people here to send money. That pains me. They are not poor people. They have gone to South Africa to make money. They have not gone there to oblige us. Those who are carrying on the struggle there do not have much money, and the moneyed people do not give them anything. Those who own money begin to love only money. They see their honour and respect only in money. Our people in South Africa say they are fighters, but don't have much money. If they don't have money, how have they carried on so far?

There is a large number of our people in East Africa. The entire East Coast is full of our people. I would ask them to send money. Our country is almost impoverished today. With what face can I ask anybody here to send money? We do have millionaires in our country and they make millions too, but even they are left with little money because of heavy taxation. And to our misfortune the people are fighting among themselves, and that also results in the loss of millions. How can I ask them to spare money for South Africa? When I was in South Africa people from here used to send money, Gokhale (Gopal Krishna Gokhale) used to send money. The Punjab and the whole of India had sent me something between 5 to 7 lakhs. I don't think I can ask people to do anything like that today. There are many Indians in Mauritius. They are coolies there. There is no communal problem in that place. There are a large number of Indians in Mombasa. They are pretty rich. They do not drink, nor do they go to prostitutes. They need money only for their food. How much money does one need for food? Our people in South Africa can say that they are fighting not for themselves but for India. Of course, I cannot stop people from sending money there, but I cannot ask them to do so, either.

[From Hindi] Prarthana Pravachan—I, pp. 428-33



22. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

NEW DELHI,
October 18, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

Blankets and cheques are still coming, but not at a satisfactory rate.

I have seen the statement issued by Sardar Patel in which he has extended his hand before the people. That shows that if we sit back depending on the Government no work can be accomplished. The Government cannot cope with the situation. It is just as well that Sardar Patel has issued the statement. It will indeed be good if we can provide some protection to the people who have nothing with which to face the cold.

That is exactly what Dr. Sushila Nayyar is doing. She regularly goes to the Purana Quila and to many other places. Today she has gone to Kurukshetra because a new camp has been set up there. People are making arrangements there, but she is a big doctor. Another lady doctor too has accompanied her. Mrs. John Matthai and many others also have gone there. Let us help them as much as we can.

I talked to you about Hindustani yesterday. Now many people are writing to me to say what a ridiculous thing I am doing. I do not think it is ridiculous. I think I am doing a very good thing for Hindustani and the Union. I serve them by doing so. Those people write to me that the trend towards Hindustani started during a period when we had fallen on evil times and were under subjugation. But we forget the fact that those people, even though they came as invaders, settled in this country. They started to think how they could settle down in this country. As a matter of fact, Urdu was born out of this fusion and it acquired a distinct form as in course of time they crammed Arabic and Persian words into the language. They even put a new garb on it. Its grammar also comes from those languages. That is not the case with Hindustani whose grammar belongs to this soil. Whatever Persian words there are in Urdu have been there for ages. It is not for us to pick out those words and remove them from the language. The people who came as invaders settled down here and adopted local customs. I think if we hate them now it will be as good as hating ourselves. But today I am mentioning this for another reason. I have written sufficiently about it. As far as the English language is concerned it was different. The British came here to build an empire. They had no intention of settling here. They never came to belong to India. They always considered themselves outsiders here, and wanted to remain as such.



They wanted their children to be brought up outside India. Later they also introduced the English language. Slowly they gave it a particular shape. Nothing happened to English similar to what happened in the case of Urdu. Urdu came into being from avadhi or other languages spoken at that time. But that is not the case with English. Now the British rule has ended in India. But what will be our fate if the English language continues to dominate us and we cannot carry on our administration without that language? Will the millions of India then learn English? Will English become our national language? Let me tell you very plainly that that is not possible. Let us not even try to do any such thing. We are sure to ruin ourselves if we ever try to do so.

A gentleman writes to me to say that I am mistaken. He says that all those who carry on the work in the country have studied English. But only a handful of people have studied English. It is true that they carried on their work in English in courts and offices, because they could thus exercise their authority. Those who have lived in slavery get used to liking the language of the State. That is all right. But when the poor Hindustani or Hindi-speaking people go to courts and offices where the work is carried on in English, they understand nothing at all. This is only betraying our intellectual bankruptcy. We just do not want to understand anything. We do not even want to know where our interests lie. The British rule has gone. Now the English language too will have to come down from the pedestal on which we have installed it and where it should never have been. A gentleman writes to me that quite another interpretation will be given to what I am saying. For people never see the intended meaning in things.

Today we have all lost our heads. All that is left is that the Hindus fight the Muslims, cut their throats, refuse to sit with them. Rajkumari Amrit Kaur who returned from Simla only yesterday or the day before, told me that poor Muslims who had lived in Simla for many years had to be removed from there merely because they were Muslims. We have become so uncivilized. What hardships they must have suffered while moving from there! There are large numbers of Hindus in Pakistan. They also complain about the same thing. These things follow one after the other. Some people say that Sanskritized Hindi is the national language of India. That English is now on the way out but people will carry on their work in the language of their province. There is a justifiable fear of conflict in this matter which is bound to create mutual hatred. English cannot continue, because there are only a handful of Englishmen here. And it is not up to them to carry on the Government.

[From Hindi]. Prarthana Pravachan — I, pp. 433-5



23. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

NEW DELHI,

October 19, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS, You feel that if the prayer starts at 6 p. m. it gets quite late as the days are becoming short. Each day becomes shorter by two to three minutes and by December 23 the day becomes very short. As it gets dark quite early these days we shall start the prayer at 5.30 p.m. from tomorrow.

You have already heard the bhajan (No. 151 in Ashram Bhajanavali.) today. I think I have not narrated to you the touching story of the bhajan. There is an Ashram Bhajanavali and all the bhajans in it have history behind them. Not all of them are well selected, though some are. But the whole collection was prepared in the Ashram. There used to be a great devotee in the Ashram who was also a musician. His name was Pandit Khare (Narayan Moreshwar Khare). He prepared this collection of bhajans. Of course, he did take help from Kakasaheb and others. This bhajan was included in the collection. My nephew Maganlal Gandhi used to sing this bhajan. He stayed with me for a long time at the Ashram in South Africa. It is not that only Pandit Khare has prepared such a collection. Many others have also done so. For those were the days of our non-violent struggle for freedom. After some years many people felt frustrated that we had not yet won freedom. It could only be concluded that there was something wrong with us. Good people should never think that when something goes wrong the reason is to be sought elsewhere. It is not right to think that the blame lies with our neighbours or our brothers but not with us. That is not the right way but the wrong one. It is incorrect to think that when things go wrong the fault lies with others and never with us. All devotees of God have said this. Tulsidas has said the same thing. So also Surdas who sings: "Who can be so crooked, wicked, or dissolute as I?" (No. 106 in Ashram Bhajanavali) Neither Tulsidas nor Surdas was such a person; but they regarded themselves as such. The more they remained away from God, the more unhappy they felt, even if they were surrounded by brothers, sisters, sons, friends and everybody else. They reflect with a sigh that there is none as crooked, wicked or dissolute as themselves. It is good that they searched within themselves for faults. This bhajan also expresses the same sentiment. Here the poet asks why he is alive though he has not seen God so far. As a rule it was Pandit Khare who used to sing this bhajan; but sometimes when he was not present or was ill, Maganlal used to sing it. Maganlal was



no musician but he had a good voice. That bhajan as he sang it, still rings in my ears. He was the pillar of the Ashram. He was like a rock in the management of the Ashram. He was very sturdy. He would always be ahead of everyone else in digging with the pickaxe. He used to have a very strong body when he was in South Africa. But when he came here he lost weight, though he was not ill. Though he had to shoulder the entire responsibility there, here the unusual thing was that he had to work among crores of people. He shared considerable responsibility of the constructive programme. How can we dispense with the constructive programme? What can swaraj mean without the constructive programme? We have attained independence, but what is its worth? What if we have achieved independence? Today we realize that if we had done sufficient constructive work in those days we would not be witnessing the scenes we see today. Is this the swaraj we had in mind? If we had done that much in those days, India's history would have been different. I have no doubt about it at all. Maganlal's God was in swaraj. His swaraj was Ramarajya.

God can be seen only in swaraj. After all, God does not possess any physical form. Some say He is a four-armed figure bearing in His hands the conch, the disk, the mace and the lotus. This is all our own imagination. How can God bear the conch, the disk, the mace and the lotus? He is niranjan (Spotless) and nirakar (Formless). When He is beyond physical existence how can He have a physical form? We create an image of God and then believe in it. Where, then, should we look for our God? Let us see Him in our actions. When we do anything considering it as yajna, we install God in our hearts. For instance, when a person plies the charkha, he sees God in the yarn he spins. When he realizes that the whole world belongs to him and his world consists of India where the poor, who do not get enough to eat, live, and that he is spinning for their sake or for Daridranarayana, he sees God in the yarn he spins. Swaraj was far off in those days. But when the Ashram was not functioning well, many a time Maganlal used to sing with a sigh: "Still does cruel life cling obstinately to the body". Then the bhajan goes on to say that the four prahara passed like four yugas. It means that even though the whole night has passed, life has not yet gone from me. The four quarters of the night have passed like four ages. That is, the night of four quarters passed but my body did not perish. He finds four quarters as long as four ages. I also find them as long. We had not won our freedom then. Now I admit that we have won it on August 15. But I do not regard it as true swaraj. It is not the swaraj of my conception. Nor can this swaraj be called Ramarajya. Today we have come to regard each other as enemies. Muslims are enemies of the Hindus and the Hindus and the Sikhs are enemies of the



Muslims. But swaraj of my conception means that we do not want to regard anyone as our enemy, nor do we want to be enemies of anyone. That swaraj has not yet come. Should the Hindus and the Muslims in India consider themselves enemies of each other? Will our brothers live in mutual animosity? Why do I say this? I had mentioned this briefly once, but I wish to say it again and again that if we truly desire to rise higher, we should all live like brothers. We have fallen at the moment and are probably still going down. Our hearts are full of murderous thoughts and hatred. We get incensed at the very sight of a Muslim. If we find him praying in the mosque we go and kill him. We regard him as our enemy and wonder how we should drive him out and turn his mosque into a temple. But think, what wrong has he done in praying in a mosque? The temple and the mosque are one and the same. Then why is it that the Muslims should destroy the temples and the Hindus destroy the mosques? They are equally at fault in the eyes of God. How can we say there is swaraj when what we Hindus do hurts the Muslims and what the Muslims do hurts the Hindus? We have reduced ourselves to this state, but we wish to come out of this fire.

I have already said that I shall either do or die in Delhi. I have come here with that intention. I have not done anything yet. True, these days we do not hear much about communal clashes, and apparently we are living like brothers. But this is like deceiving ourselves. The police and the military are posted here just because there is some danger. Are the Muslims who are here free from fear? Will I also be free from it? I don't think so. Some Muslims are here with me too. Would you insult them right here? Would you kill them right before my eyes? Before you kill them you will have to kill me. Sheikh Abdullah was sitting behind me here yesterday. There were also some Kashmiri Pandits with him. The Sheikh is our friend. Somebody killed our Rafi Saheb's (Rafi Ahmed Kidwai) brother at Mussoorie. He was an innocent man. He was our sevak. His widow is sitting right here. I do not wish to narrate that tragic tale here lest it should arouse repugnance in the people. My heart is full of many things. I know quite a few things. But I do not wish to prolong the talk. However let me give you the gist at least. If all of us long for death because we have not been able to see God, as we sing in the bhajan, the first step towards it is to see our faults as big as mountains and overlook the faults of others. If we declare before the whole world that the entire fault lies with us, and others are all good men, it is not cowardice. We do not fall on that account, rather we raise ourselves high and become courageous.



If we wish to bring about the rule of God or Ramarajya (Kingdom of God) in India, I would suggest that our first task is to magnify our own faults and find no fault with the Muslims. I do not say that the Muslims have done no wrong. They have caused a lot of harm. There is no question of covering up those wrongs or pretending ignorance about them. But knowingly I do not see them. If I start thinking about those wrongs, I shall go crazy and I shall not be able to serve India. What if I begin to think that I have no enemies and expose my own faults before the world and close my eyes to those of others? God is there to see them. What does it matter if someone slaps me or cuts my ears or throat? One has to die some time. There is God to do justice. In whatever I do, I should not forget Him. That is why I want to repeat again and again that you must keep your hearts so pure that none in the world may complain to me against you. Today when I went there (To Lord Mountbatten) I was asked about the situation in Delhi. I had to hang my head in shame. For, even now, the Hindus and the Muslim are not one at heart. It is good that because of the police and the military arranged by the Sardar and Jawaharlal, they are not cutting each other's throats. But what of that? Even the British used to make such arrangements. We do not wish to see what is happening in Delhi. Today my wings are clipped. If I could grow my wings again, I would fly to Pakistan and see even there what crimes the Hindus or the Sikhs have committed. But what even if they have done anything? Why should they not stay in their own homes there? But do I have the face to say that today? I can only reason with people and tell everyone that if we wish to see God and establish true swaraj, we must all unite and declare that India is not a fallen country. The result will be that our prestige will rise and we will also have time to banish hunger and thirst from our country.

Today the whole world is watching us, because it is felt that if Asia has to rise high and the negroes of Africa have to make progress, India must be helped to rise high. India has always been the centre of Asia or Africa or, one may say, even Europe. If India is able to achieve something, the whole world will be able to take courage from it.

The world is shivering in cold. If the world is to have any warmth, it would be only through India. It is my prayer to God and also to you that we should behave in such a manner that all of us should feel warm and through us the whole world should get warmth. People throughout Asia and Africa are looking towards us. If they feel



convinced that something is going to happen here, then the whole world will follow our example.

[From Hindi] Prarthana Pravachan—I, pp. 436-41



24. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

(As Gandhiji was observing silence, his written speech was read out.)

NEW DELHI,

October 20, 1947

Rajkumari Amrit Kaur informed me last night after the prayer that a Muslim Health Officer was butchered yesterday while he was on duty. He was, she told me, a good, conscientious officer. He leaves behind a widow and children. The widow was so distracted that her one wish was that she and her children were also similarly butchered, now that their caretaker and bread-winner was removed from their midst by cruel hands. What was the point in living after that? (This sentence is taken from the speech recorded by the All India Radio.)

I told you only last evening that all was not well with Delhi as it appeared on the surface. So long as tragedies such as I described continue to occur, there is little ground for rejoicing over the silence that reigns on the surface in Delhi. Is it the silence of the grave as was once said of the surface silence during his Viceroyalty by the then Lord Irwin, now Lord Halifax?

The Rajkumari added that it was no easy task to get together a sufficient number of Muslim friends who would perform the burial rites in strict accord with the Koran.

This narrative must cause any sensitive mind, as it causes me, a shudder. Should Delhi come to such a pass? It is a sure sign of cowardice for the majority to dread a minority, however powerful it might be.

I hope that the authorities will trace the perpetrators of the crime and bring them to justice.

If it was the last of such crimes, I should have little to say, deplorable though even such a crime would always be. But I very much fear that it is a pointer. The conscience of Delhi must be quickened by it. Money for blanket continues to pour in. My thanks go out to all the donors. It is good, too, that not one donation is earmarked for this community or that. It is my painful duty to draw attention to another menace. if it be one. I do not know whether this danger is real or not. (This sentence is taken from Prarthana Pravachan—I, p. 442.)

A Britisher writes in an open letter “To whom it may concern”:



Several of us are living in a lonely spot in a disturbed area. We are pure British and for years we have devoted ourselves at great personal sacrifice to the welfare of the people of this country. . . .3 We now find that a secret word has gone out that all the British left in India are to be murdered. I read in the newspapers Pandit Nehru's assurance that the Government will protect the persons and property of all loyal citizens of the State. But there is no (Omission as in the source) protection for persons living in little country places or almost none. None at all for us. It is a physical impossibility.

There is much else in this open letter which can be quoted with advantage. I have reproduced enough to warn us of the lurking danger. Of course, it may be only a scare and there may be nothing beyond it. There may be no secret circular. There is, however, prudence in not disregarding such warnings. I am hoping that the writer's fears are wholly groundless. I agree with him that all promise of protection by authority in isolated places is vain. It simply cannot be done, no matter how efficient the military and police machine may be which, it must be admitted, it is not at present. Protection must come first from within, that is, from rocklike faith in God and secondly, from the goodwill of the neighbouring population. If neither in present, the best and the safest way is to leave India's inhospitable shores. Things have not come to such a pass.

The duty of all us is to regard with special attention all the Britishers who choose to remain in India as its faithful servants. They must be free from any kind of insult or disregard. The Press and public bodies have to be circumspect in this as in many other respects, if we are to render a good account of ourselves as a free and self-respecting nation. Those who respect themselves cannot make good the claim, if they will not respect their neighbours, however few or insignificant they may be.

Harijan, 2-11-1947



25. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

NEW DELHI,

October 21, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

Today I also heard of an incident. In this it was not a Muslim who was killed but a Hindu. He was a Government employee. He was doing his duty where he had been sent when somebody shot at him. I have not heard that he had committed any crime. The man with the revolver felt that the victim did not do what he was told and so he killed him. All that I wish to say is that we have got into the habit of killing. It is just the beginning of our independence, and right from now such are the thoughts that have come to possess us. We want to kill simply because we possess a revolver. It is like a person aiming at a flying bird and killing it. Great hunter that he is, he aims at a flying bird. Similarly a man makes an officer his aim. That officer had received orders to carry out a certain task at the place. But the killer had a fancy to kill him. If we continue like this, we are going to land ourselves in a terrible situation. No man can then live in peace. It is said that there are many countries inhabited by savages where no one can live in safety because those who possess arms murder people and they have no qualms about it. The one who kills a person cannot bring him back to life. This is a fact. It is also a law that only he who gives life can take it away. But that is what only God can do. When a human being cannot create life, what right has he to take it? Is it up to man to create life? But the Hindus desire to pounce upon the Muslims and the Muslims want to pounce upon the Sikhs and the Sikhs want to jump at the Muslims. They may do this now, but when the enemies are gone, they will start killing one another. This is the law of the world. We have started following that very law. Hence I thought I might mention this incident.

Another thing is that the authorities have arrested many people. In the past we were not free. Today also we should presume that we are not free. In those days also people were arrested. At the most they could make an appeal to the Viceroy and could be released at his word. But the Viceroy could not release them on his own. He had to work within the limits of the law even when martial law was in force. He had his own officers functioning under the law. If they agreed that somebody might be released he was released. As for the others the Viceroy would say he could get them released only after investigation. This is a perfectly legal position. Those arrested under the law,



would be sentenced if found guilty. But now the Government is in our hands. We had not run the Government so far. If someone minister thinks that just because he is a minister he can release whomever he wants to, then we will be finished. It should not be that murderers are arrested and later released. We should not follow the practice of arresting culprits and then releasing them. In such a situation I would say that once somebody has been arrested under the law by the police the Government cannot release him because there is some complaint or appeal for it. On what grounds can it release him? Is it for nothing that we have the police, courts and prosecutors? How can I acquit somebody because he happens to be some relative or a friend of mine or because his case has been recommended by somebody? How can he be acquitted? In my view he cannot be acquitted. He cannot be punished at all if he is not guilty. Thus, we must keep our entire judiciary clean. We must have judges of that calibre. The police and the prosecutors should not carry on a case just for doing so and they should not think that a particular number of cases should be settled by the court. Only those who have got to be punished should be punished. But legally these matters fall within the jurisdiction of the courts. Supposing a man complains that a particular person has assaulted him and should be arrested, and the offender is arrested, should I then go to a minister to secure his release? The minister would suggest that the matter be taken to the court. If the complainer then says that there is no point in arresting him as it would only aggravate the feeling of animosity, the offender would be acquitted on the plaintiff's request. If the complainer says that even though he had filed a complaint he wishes that the arrested man should be acquitted, then the court can acquit him. That leaves the prosecutor. The court can recommend the same thing to him too. But if there is a case of murder actually committed, the accused cannot be acquitted even if the complainant wants it. If the guilty man is acquitted, our work cannot proceed. I have practised law and secured the release of many. How? The murderer must plead guilty of the murder and then assure the court that his mind is now pure and plead for mercy. The plaintiff can also say that the accused should not be punished because the two have become friends. What will he gain by getting him hanged now when he killed under provocation? Now the accused has become a friend who can be of help and who may turn his mind to God. He may start praying to God and, if so, why should he prevent him from doing so? Then the accused will also plead guilty of the act of number and pray for mercy and seek to be acquitted saying that the complainer is prepared to forgive him and maybe he will do good deeds and serve society. That is the way to secure the acquittal of the murderer. It is possible to make



his procedure legal. But let us not misuse the power we have now. If we do so people will insist on any number of guilty persons being released. What would even the poor minister do? Supposing he wrongly orders somebody's release. It is within his power to order the release of a person, but he should not do so. Even if it is his own brother or friend or wife who has committed a crime, he should refrain from doing so. He should say the appeal should be made to the court or the prosecutor or the plaintiff, for they cannot do anything in the matter. We cannot get on with our work unless the ministers are pure at heart.

Please know that I have received a suggestion that I should not speak for more than 15 minutes. I do not even wish to speak longer. I have talked enough. I am not particularly fond of speaking at length. I speak only when there is a need to talk. But I am told that it would be to the greater benefit of people if I did not speak for more than 15 minutes. People would listen with greater attention because they would be keen to listen to my words. That would also become a habit and I would not speak for longer than 15 minutes.

[From Hindi] Prarthana Pravachan—I, pp. 444-7



26. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

NEW DELHI,

October 22, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

First of all let me inform you that blankets continue to come. I have just come to know that two hundred blankets have arrived today. The blankets and also money arrive every day. I hope that the people who are in the camps here will have enough things to cover themselves with. More of them will be available. It is good that there is this much generosity still left in our people.

A gentleman approached me. I hardly ever read any Urdu newspaper, not to speak of reading it daily. I do read Urdu but only with some difficulty. When a child has to learn his alphabet he starts reading gradually. I am in a similar position. I know a little more than a child, but I cannot read fast. So that gentleman read out to me a couple of items from an Urdu newspaper. I was pained to hear the contents. I do not intend to narrate the details. The newspaper stated that people had made up their minds. I hope it is only the editor of that paper and not the whole country that has resolved that all Muslims should migrate to Pakistan and that those who remain will be either slaughtered or sent away to Pakistan. If things turn out to be what this paper or its editor predicts, it will be a matter of great shame. Such things should not have come from the pen of an editor. Such newspapers should not be published at all. If that editor is convinced about what he says, he is free to express his view to the people. But when he does so, it would amount to proclaiming from the house-tops that the Muslims should either go away to Pakistan or they will be slaughtered. As I said yesterday, what Hindus would do when Muslims went away to Pakistan? Would they fight among themselves? Somebody has informed me that internal fights have already started. This is inevitable. Once one has a taste of killing, one can't resist the temptation. The same thing is going to happen to us. But the editor of that paper has not been wise in publishing his opinion. Our people have become crazy after newspapers. They are not concerned with the Gita or the Bible or the Koran; the newspaper is their Gita and whatever is published in newspapers is gospel truth for them. It is very unfortunate that people should be so gullible that newspapers exploit their credulity and publish such things. I do not wish to say any more about this.



Now another thing is that complaints are pouring in from all corners. It may have been that during the British days the native States acted as they liked. The British Government exercised some control. This had to be done for the maintenance of the Empire. But now that Government is no more. Today their department is in the hands of Sardar Patel; so let him do something. But what can poor Sardar do under the circumstances? He has his own way of saying things. He has always served India. That is why he is the Sardar. But he has neither arms nor army in his possession. He is not a man of the army in any case. He is no commander whose order would be automatically obeyed. So long as the soldiers think that they eat the salt of India and he is their master, that is, if they consider him to be a great servant [of the people], things will go right.

Now the Princes of the States say that they have signed the instruments of accession, but that does not mean that they have been deprived of anything. They too have got their police. They were mere puppets during the British rule, but they are no longer so. The States can do anything they want. I too belong to a State. Hence I know what the States can do, and how much good they can do. I wish very respectfully to tell the Princes of the States that they cannot hope to survive if they think in their arrogance that they can beat up their subjects and slaughter them. I have told them that the Princes will have a place for themselves if they remain trustees of their subjects. If they want to be the rulers of their people and exploit them and oppress them, they will find no place for themselves. I have no doubt about it. God alone knows what the situation in India is going to be. The Princes do not have an alternative. They can never rule India, even if we become slaves. Would the Princes like to become slaves then? The days when the rulers could act arbitrarily are gone. That was another age. The British rulers found good use of the Princes who were there, through whom they could rule. The British only acted in their self-interest. How then are they to blame? But it is our misfortune that today we have lost our heads and fight among ourselves. Whichever side wins, a third power or a few of the powers would get together and devour India. Along with India Princes, too, would be devoured. If they remain loyal to India and become servants of their people, it will be well. I would say to the people of the States that they should not be cowards. What if the Princes possess arms and they are unarmed? We too fought against the Empire. And we were unarmed then. We did not possess any arms secretly. Had it been so, I should have had some information about it. Millions of people fought against the Empire with the force of their conviction. We thought even if they killed, they might kill one lakh, two



or even three lakhs. But how many could they have killed after all? It was a question of population of 400 million. Their hands would have trembled if they had set out to kill all of us. These 400 million were bound to win their independence. What we do with that freedom is another matter. I would say that the Princes should not lose their heads. They should realize that they cannot act arbitrarily lead immoral lives. They must not drown themselves in alcohol all day long. I have conveyed my view to you and through you to the Princes.

I mentioned once that Dussehra was coming soon. And Bakr-Id is just the day after it. These two festivals almost coincide. The Hindus and the Muslims are always filled with fear during these days. There is a greater scare here today because excesses can be only on one side. If Hindus get excited and think that they have got their chance because of Bakr-Id, they can slaughter the Muslims thinking they were celebrating Dussehra. What is Dussehra? That is the day for celebrating Rama's victory. It is said that on the Ekadashi Rama and Bharata would be reunited. By these things we have to learn restraint and goodness. We have to learn what dharma is. If we learn this we can celebrate Dussehra in the right spirit. Durga puja is conducted on the Dussehra day. What does worship of Durga imply? It does not mean that we should be bloodthirsty. Durga signifies shakti, great power. We can raise ourselves by worshipping here. Similarly, Dussehra does not mean that we should have fun and entertainment throughout the day. In Gujarat this festival is called Navaratri. (The nine days preceding Dussehra) When we were young my mother used to tell us that we should not have regular meals during the Navaratri. We could have fruit or at the most milk, but no solid food. Of course the best thing would have been to observe complete fast. My mother used to undertake fasts quite often, and I could hardly compete with her. My elder brother could not do it at all, though I tried to do it a little. But considering my mother's capacity to fast I am a mere toy, just a child. That is the significance of Dussehra for us. Later, when Diwali comes, we can eat nice things and enjoy ourselves, but none of these things during Dussehra. This is the meaning of Navaratri. Shall we abandon its essence and start killing? Then there is Bakr-Id. We have frightened away our Muslim fellowmen. There are nice people among them. Even the nationalist Muslims are very much upset at the moment. They are aware of the situation. But where can they go? Should we become so heartless as to drive away even these people? What sort of peace would we have then?



Are you going to annihilate all the three-and-half or four crore Muslims? Or would you like to convert them to Hinduism? But even that would be a kind of annihilation. Supposing you were so pressurized, would you agree to become Muslims? Supposing you were forced to read the Kalma and threatened with death if you refused? I would be the first person to say that they might rather cut our throats than suggest this. We must have at least that much courage. It is senseless to ask Muslims to accept Hinduism like this. I don't want such Hindus. Am I going to save Hinduism with the help of such Hindus? I want Hindus who can exercise restraint. Why should I be so arrogant and ruthless? One cannot become a tyrant and follow dharma at the same time. On these two occasions therefore let us maintain peace and atone for our sins and meet each other as brothers. If you can do this much, you will not find me here after Id.

A Hindu gentleman has asked me if I would go to Punjab. I asked him if he would send me to Punjab. Yes, if I went there I would fight with the people there also. You already know about my method of fighting. I would talk to them to my heart's content. Millions of Hindus and Sikhs are coming here. Why do they not stay on in their homes? I shall have no peace till this happens. Then Muslims have to be brought back here. You may say that that cannot be done. According to me that can be done and the key to the situation lies in Delhi. I do hope that during those two days we prove that both the Hindus and the Muslims are good and are going to live together in harmony.

[From Hindi] Prarthana Pravachan—I, pp. 447-52



27. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

NEW DELHI,

October 23, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

Two people have written to me “We are refugees. We are living under the protection of our friends. We are very much troubled on account of the cold weather. Kindly let us know from where we can get blankets and quilts. Is there any such provision for refugees?” They say they belong to Rawalpindi. Like that there are innumerable people. However, the quilts and blankets are actually being collected for the people accommodated in the refugee camps, and who as is very evident have nothing to cover themselves with. Hence provision is being made for them. Quite a large stock has been distributed and more will be distributed. These are not just a handful of people. They are there in thousands. Quite likely, there are lakhs and lakhs of such people who should get these things. One of the camps at Kurukshetra has been taken over by the Central Government. A large number of people are accommodated there and many more keep coming.

There are many such camps even in the city of Delhi. At least three, perhaps four, camps are in East Punjab. In those camps also the people should receive the things provided in the camp here. They too are refugees. But in my view, it is for the friends with whom the refugees stay to arrange for those things. Very likely those friends may be managing blankets or quilts for their own families with great difficulty. Then, how can they provide them to those whom they have given shelter? I don't say such a thing is not possible. But it seems to me we will not be able to give quilts to all who need them. Moreover, I do not think that everyone who asks for these things is honest about it. It is not as if people asked for these things because they needed them. I have seen several camps. I have always been engaged in this type of work. I had to do these things even when I was in South Africa, and so I am familiar with the difficulties of such work. I have heard no complaints against the two persons who have written to me, and I have nothing to say against them. But I have no doubt that these things should reach the people who are really needy and who do not have them. But how would I know about these people? I do try to find out. It is not as if I am not trying to get any information at all. Nor do I presume that no one would ever deceive me. And it is not that anyone can have things from me for the asking. Can these friends



point out any such instance to me? I cannot send those things myself but I think these persons will somehow get them from somewhere. I do have blankets with me. But they are all meant to be sent to Kurukshetra. Other people are collecting these things too. They can send the blankets to these two people.

People are still coming here every day. They go to the Birla Mandir and that place is all full. Now there is no room for any more people. The people in the temple have taken as many people as they can. They have always shared the sorrows of others. They are working day and night. They go to meet people and collect blankets and food from them which they distribute among the needy. But as people pour in day after day, they too get tired. How long can they go on giving things to them? The same is the problem for us. I would only tell these people that they should do something for themselves. It is true that when these things are done for everybody they should be done for these persons also. The same rule should apply to all. We cannot carry on work on a large scale if we have one rule for some people and another rule for others. And we have to work on a large scale. That is why I have taken so much time in explaining these things. How shall we face the cold which is increasing every day? I do not wish that anyone should suffer from it even for a day. This is one thing I wish to say.

I heard another thing today. Since many shops were open today a poor Muslim thought he would also open his shop, and so he started out to open his shop. He used to repair spectacles. Such persons must be hardly earning a few rupees a day. I do not know who he was. I don't even know his name. He was murdered as he was about to open his shop. It is a matter of shame for the whole of Delhi. Who could have committed that murder? Was it one person or two who did it? But how could two people do it? Where had the military and the police disappeared? The shop was not in a lonely corner. Nor did the incident take place at night. No shop can be run secretly. People keep coming and going. Why did no one try to stop the killing? How did the assailants dare to commit that murder? People are just indifferent and quiet their conscience with the thought that a Muslim has been done to death. They feel that if the Muslims kill the Hindu and the Sikhs, why should they not kill the Muslims? Their hearts are possessed by such thoughts of revenge. Thus must be stopped. If we do not stop it, Delhi will lose all its character. Do you think that only the Hindus and the Sikhs will be living in Delhi? In that case that will be the end of Delhi. The world will not



accept such a situation. Delhi has a long history behind it. It would be madness even to try to erase that history.

Today I wish to say something about the people who have become victims of leprosy. There are quite a number of such people even in India. They are not found on the roads because they arouse a feeling of repugnance. It is not as if people having leprosy are sinner and others suffering from other diseases are not. It is true that those who suffer from a disease must have violated somehow of nature, but that is another matter. I feel I have violated nature's law because I am suffering from a persistent cough. And I do believe that violating nature's law is being sinful. Everybody is prone to cough. But I am not prepared to agree that there has been no mistake on my part. So whatever rules I make for myself would be applicable to the whole world. Leprosy is a skin disease. How it is caused is a long story. I believe it is a disease of the body and there is no difference between leprosy and cough. A victim of leprosy suffers more pain and when he starts losing his thumbs, hands and nose, he becomes really very ugly. But it is not that he suffers more pain because he becomes ugly. I would say that we should have greater contempt for people who have wicked hearts. A person who has an unclean body which is the result of an unclean mind and who has a perverse outlook, instead of listening to the bhajans is interested in listening to the stories of wicked men, is a real leper. There are countless people suffering from this disease, and nobody ever bothers about them. But since everybody does not contract the disease of leprosy, we are repelled by those who have it. We used to have a number of Christians amongst us. All the leprosy hospitals were and still are in the hands of the Christians. They serve the lepers out of sheer philanthropy. Today there are some people in India also who work for the lepers out of a feeling of altruism. One such philanthropist is Manohar Diwan. I should like to call him a mahatma. He lives at Wardha and is a great disciple of Vinoba Bhave. Vinoba is a very great man indeed. Manohar felt that he also should do something. He chose to serve the lepers. Vinoba also inspired him to do that work. He remains detached. He is not bothered about money. He is no doctor, but he has made sufficient study of the disease. Many people seek his help. A small conference is being organized at Wardha very soon through a committee. People engaged in this work will be meeting there on the 30th of this month. Dr. Sushila Nayyar too is going there for the same purpose. Actually Dr. Jivaraj (Dr. Jivaraj N. Mehta, Director-General of Health Services in India) and Rajkumari were to go there. Rajkumari is even more familiar with this work because she has lived with me at Sevagram. But as she is deeply involved in the work here she cannot go there. No one



can compel her to go there. And who would insist? It is a matter of rendering service. Anyone who chooses to go can go there. But they cannot go because they are hard pressed for time. There is a man called Jagadisan (T. N. Jagadisan, who was looking after leprosy work sponsored by Kasturba Gandhi National Memorial Trust). He is himself a victim of leprosy. He belongs to Madras. He is a very good man and a great scholar. He is a great follower of Srinivasa Sastri. He has devoted himself to this work. He is also attending the conference along with many others. It is a tragic and at the same time an interesting story. Many people are involved in that work. There is a very big leprosy hospital in Calcutta. It functions on a large scale. All this work is being done in the spirit of altruism and is growing day by day. When I was in Calcutta I was taken there and asked to write some comments. But I was making arrangements to come here. There are many other leprosy hospitals in different parts of the country. But this work is not being carried on as large a scale as it should be. I do not suggest that everybody should take interest in this work. But let us at least know that when we have so much idle time we may as well engage ourselves in such type of work. Shall we remain busy only destroying each other? I would say that this is the worst type of disease, the worst type of leprosy. We disregard good work and destroy ourselves in mutual fighting. The Hindus kill the Muslims and the Muslims kill the Hindus and the Sikhs. How long shall we continue to indulge in mutual killing? How much better it would be if we made good use of our time and devoted ourselves to activities that would promote feelings of love!

[From Hindu] Prarthana Pravachan—I, pp. 452-6



28. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

NEW DELHI,

October 24, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTER,

Probably the news appeared in the newspapers four or five days ago that a labour conference is being held here which will be attended by many representatives from Asia. The conference will be held on the 27th of this month. The newspapers also said that I will be inaugurating that conference. I knew nothing about it. Nor do I think I mentioned it to anyone. I asked one of the journalists how he got that information. I told him to contradict the report. Our Labour Minister Shri Jagjivan Ram had come to see me. I told him the same thing. He said I had got to be present at the conference, and as it would be a Monday and since I was already in Delhi, he thought there was no need to ask my consent. Such are our newspapers. When I told Jawaharlal that I might have consented by mistake, he was really astonished. There is no need for me to go there at all, for I have ceased to be useful for any purpose other than unity. Today I have only one task before me, and even that is more than I can attend to. I feel that if I succeed in that I shall have accomplished my life's mission. We all belong to the same country and let us all be one. If all the Hindus, Sikhs, Muslim, Parsis and Christians remain united, I shall not worry about anything else. They all belong to India and they have to live here. Why then should they indulge in fighting?

It is a great shock for a person, who has been dreaming of freedom from his childhood days and who strove hard to achieve it, that when freedom came, this poison has come along with it. This pains me very much. What could be worse than this? I want to stop this evil. My duty is but to try. I may succeed or I may not. "Let those who will, praise; and those who will, blame"—that is what we heard in the bhajan (1 No 159 in Ashram Bhajanavali.) today. Abuse or praise, it is all the same, for I only worship Rama and have dedicated everything to Him. But I must continue with my effort and devote my whole life to it.

As usual blankets have been received today also. They are being sent to whom they should be. The need is very great. So many blankets are required that we cannot satisfy everybody. Providing for everybody is a big job. God will meet the needs of all. Will those who are helpless and have been reduced to poverty from the state of



prosperity be kept naked and hungry? If we are pure at heart, God will provide food for us. But if we continue to be unworthy we shall have to go without food and clothing. I mentioned one thing yesterday about the people who have become victims of leprosy. I referred to Jagadisan in that connection. He is a great scholar. He used to suffer from this disease. He is not completely cured of it; but it is very much under control. He does considerable work among the lepers and takes much interest. He mixes freely with them. He is of course a very hard-working man. He lives in Madras, not in Wardha. But he has been there for the past several days. He had corresponded with me about this matter. I got his letter a few days ago, but I read it only today. I found in it one suggestion, which I wish to explain to you. The gentleman has said that the victim of leprosy should not be called a leper. People give a bad meaning to that word and consider him even worse than an untouchable. After all an untouchable does not harm anybody. We believe that we become fallen by coming into physical contact with the untouchables. I have already said that real leprosy is the unclean state of mind. Hatred towards one's fellow-beings and speaking ill of the people of some community or class is a sign of mental perversity which is worse than leprosy. If such people are worse than the victims of leprosy, why should that name be attached to the latter? Let these people be described as victims of leprosy and not as lepers. If people are believed to be bad because of a bad name, they should not be called by such a name. You may call a rose by any name, but that flower would never be without its fragrance—even if it is called by the worst possible name. If this is that Jagadisan says, he is right that there is not just one disease which can be passed on to others by physical contact. If a person suffering from scabies touches another person, he is likely to pass on his disease. Leprosy is such a disease and is contagious like cold, cholera, plague, etc. Why then should people suffering from that disease be looked upon with contempt? When a person gets really affected by leprosy, people start looking at him with contempt. They refer to him as a lowly creature. But real lowly creatures are those who show contempt. We must get rid of this leprosy of contempt. That is why I decided to talk again about this thing today.

Rajkumari Amrit Kaur was to attend the conference at Wardha on the 30th. She should have gone. Dr. Jivraj was also to go. He should have gone. But how can they go? They are tied down to their work. They can get away from it only for a day. But it would take them two days because they cannot return the same day. No aeroplane goes to Wardha. It goes only to Nagpur. They can return only after two days.



I wish to mention an important thing. Brajkishan has informed you that tomorrow I shall go and pray in the jail. The inmates of the jail desire that I should hold the prayer there. This will please me and also please you but you will not be able to join me there. It is a prison and only prisoners can go there. I am going there because they have invited me. We shall meet here again the day after tomorrow.

[From Hindi] Prarthana pravachan—I, pp. 457-9



29. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

NEW DELHI,

October 25, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

I was very happy when I received the invitation to hold the prayer before the prisoners of this jail and to address them in my usual manner, after the prayer. All the prisoners are probably not aware that I am myself an old time prisoner right from my days in South Africa. I was not guilty from my point of view; but from the point of view of the Empire I was guilty. I have served all kinds of imprisonments and I have seen many jails. Jail rules in South Africa are very strict. And then the Indians count for nothing there. Even if one was a barrister, it made no difference. All Indians were considered coolies. There were the Indians on the one hand and Negroes on the other, and then the British—all living in their own worlds. When the satyagraha started (1 In July 1907.), thousands of satyagrahis joined it, for in a satyagraha there would not be just a couple of persons. At the time of my first imprisonment (On January 10, 1908; vide “Trial at Johannesburg”, 10-1-1908.) 150 of us were taken prisoners. In the beginning there were not many people. I was there and four or five others were with me; but in due course our number grew to 150. We were all packed together in one ward along with the natives. We got quite fed up because of such crowding. I would like to tell you how strict the jail rules were and how ruthlessly they were observed. Here in India we make much fuss by making a distinction between political prisoners and criminals. No such distinction is made in South Africa. All prisoners are regarded as criminals there. I do not believe that among the prisoners political prisoners belong to a higher category and criminal prisoners belong to a lower category. In the eyes of the law, all those who have broken it are equally guilty. Why then distinguish between the guilty ones? But here we were not only political prisoners, but even belonged to A, B and C categories. Was it not because ours was a mighty struggle? We were millions in the field and among us there were also some big people. But who was big among those poor creatures there? They were all small business men. There were Hindus, Muslims, Parsis and others. Nobody made any distinction between Hindus, Muslims or Parsis. They were all called coolies, or, say, Indians. So we could not even pose to be big and insist on being put in A category and those who were lower in B and the lowest in C category. I do not even believe in these divisions. But here we did all that. I believe that anyone



who goes to prison is a prisoner. I do not believe that a prisoner alone has committed a crime and that those who are outside, well-dressed people, are not guilty. I have been incarcerated ten times. (Namely— 1. January 10 to 30, 1908—Johannesburg 2. October 7 to December 12, 1908—Volksrust 3. February 25 to May 24, 1909— —do— 4. November 11 to December 18, 1913—Dundee 5. April 9 to 11, 1919—On train from Kosi to Bombay 6. March 10, 1922 to February 5, 1924—Sabarmati/Yeravda 7. May 5, 1930 to January 26, 1931—Yeravda 8. January 4, 1932 to May 8, 1933— —do— 9. August 1 to 23, 1933—Sabarmati/Yeravda 10. August 9, 1942 to May 6, 1944—Yeravda/Aga Khan Palace, Poona) I do not remember exactly, but I have spent quite a few years in prison and so I know about these things. The jail superintendents and others had become my friends. There used to be a superintendent who was a very good man and a great jailer. He once told me that he had been in charge of prisoners but the world had no idea of the crimes he had committed himself. He told me that the prisoners under him had come to spend their four or five years of imprisonment or they had come with death sentences which had been later condoned. But he wondered how many ever knew the crimes he had committed. He said perhaps God alone knew about his crimes. So he did not relish the idea that he should be the chief jailer and those others should be prisoners. I also share this belief of his. So I wondered with what attitude I should come and meet you. The British rule has now ended. They have withdrawn themselves. It was a nice thing they did. But what should we do with our prisons now? I have been a witness to the conditions that prevailed in the jails during the British days and I know very well how good or bad they were. But now that the Government is in our own hands, our prisons, far from remaining prisons, should become hospitals. If somebody has committed a murder or a theft or turned an outlaw, or committed any of the crimes mentioned in law books, I consider all these to be a kind of disease. It is a malady. No one commits a crime for its own sake. If somebody indulges in adultery or commits some other crime under the influence of liquor, he does not do it for pleasure. Now that I have grown old and have also acquired experience, I have realized that man's actions are guided by his nature. The prisoners should be taught how they should live. The superintendent and the deputy commissioner take care of the prisoners and order that such and such a prisoner should be flogged or such and such a prisoner should do a particular work by way of punishment. But I would suggest that the superintendents and the deputy commissioners should be like surgeons and doctors in hospitals and try to reform the prisoners as a doctor would try to cure an alcoholic. The addict's attention should be drawn to all the evil effects of alcoholism. And supposing somebody has kidnapped a girl—this is of course a grave crime—but even he should



be made to realize that what he did was a sort of disease. If our jails could be so transformed, it would be a great thing and all the prisoners would also be happy. But by being happy they surely would not wish to remain in prison forever. Do the patients who go to hospitals wish to live there forever? Moreover hospitals have nice big buildings which is not the case with our prisons here. How can we have such buildings for our prisons? Ours is a poor country. We would go bankrupt if we started rebuilding our prisons like palatial hospital buildings. Such prisons are not found even in South Africa which is a land of gold. Even the prison cells for the English prisoners there are not like palaces. England is a rich country and hence it has such prisons. This I can say because I have seen the British prisons. Of course I have not seen the prisons in America. But we can at least make our prisons like hospitals where doctors treat the patients. When a patient leaves the hospital after recovering from an illness, he feels forever grateful. The same thing should happen in our prisons. Let the prisoners have no ground to complain about the harsh treatment and atrocities in prisons or about the wickedness of the superintendents and jailers. Let them not get a chance to say that everything was bad. Let them say that they were looked after as if in a hospital, were fed properly and taught how to lead a good life. I have already said what the people in charge of the prisons should do. But ultimately it is not in their hands to do that. It is for the Government to decide. Or, it is for Panditji, the Sardar, say, the whole Cabinet, that is, the Government, to do these things. But the Government must tell the prison authorities that this is how they should behave. If the latter then violate the rules and adopt tyrannical methods, that would be another matter. No criminal should be a jailer or superintendent or a commissioner these days. We have at least learnt this and they all work under the Government. The Government does not possess a large army, nor can it seek outside help to discipline the officials. They willingly obey the orders of their Government. Our entire administration would collapse if they did not carry out orders willingly and there would be chaos in the country. So, as for the officials, I have said that they should not violate the law. And there are some small things they can do without being instructed by the Government. For instance, they should be kind to the prisoners. What is there to learn in this? Let them regard prisons as hospitals and prisoners as patients. If they did this much, at least one thing would be accomplished.

Now I wish to address myself to the prisoners as a prisoner. I have also been imprisoned as a satyagrahi. A satyagrahi prisoner cannot indulge in a deliberate crime. He would never harass the jail superintendent or the jailer, or insult them. He has to



be an ideal prisoner. Then only can he carry on his satyagraha well. Even the prisoners who have come here after actually committing crimes should become satyagrahis here. They should never defy the jail rules. They should accept the restrictions of prison life and be content with what they get. If the food given to the prisoners is not sufficient or properly cooked or is found to contain extraneous substances like grit and worms, they should complain to the superintendent or the jailer. These things do happen. I have seen them with my own eyes because I have lived in prisons. But even for these things why should the jail officials be approached? These things are in the hands of the prisoners themselves, for there are no professional cooks in prisons. The Government cannot manage the prisons if they start keeping cooks. The prisoners themselves are made to cook. Let them do the job with their hearts in it. Let them cook rice after cleaning it well and let them not keep chapatis half-baked. All that is in your own hands. You must do this work as if you were doing it in your own homes. You have come here after committing some crimes. Anyone can commit a crime. But some are detected, and some are branded guilty without having committed any crime. Such things do happen. I think if you do this much, you can become ideal prisoners.

You can do one thing. Among you there must be Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs. Even among the Muslims there may be people belonging to different sects. But you can all live here like brothers. Today a kind of poison has spread in our country. I hope that it will not spread at least in the jails. You must come out of the prison as ideal citizens. Then the Deputy Commissioner and the Jail Superintendent would tell me that I have done a good job. They would tell me that their work has become easier, they are not being harassed and the jail rules are being properly observed and all the prisoners are making efforts every day to reform themselves. I would only pray to God that you may become ideal prisoners and go out of here as ideal citizens and try to stop the people outside from doing evil things. You should tell them that they should forget that the Hindus are enemies of the Muslims and the Muslims are the enemies of the Hindus. Everyone is likely to commit mistakes.

Tomorrow is Id. I offer Id greetings to my Muslims brethren. I wish that all the Hindu and Sikh prisoners here should offer Id greetings to their Muslim companions. In the end, I wish to tell you that you must always live in amity.

[From Hindi] Prarthana Pravachan—I, pp. 459-64



30. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

NEW DELHI,

October 26, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

At the outset I would like to reply to a gentleman's question. He says: "You say that it is not good to harbour feelings of revenge. But don't your followers who are devotees of Rama excite the feeling of revenge by burning Ravana's effigy?" There are two fallacies in this. First of all, who are my followers? I don't even know about them. I would like to be a devotee of Rama. But I am not sure that I am. After all, it is no easy thing to be a devotee of Rama. Hence it is wrong to refer to any devotees as my followers. I do not have any followers at all. But what happens is that people make an effigy of Ravana who is defeated by Rama. Thus we saw Rama vanquishing Ravana. But who amongst us is Rama and who is Ravana? If every man can become Rama, who would become Ravana? This is only a story in which Rama is portrayed as God and Ravana as His enemy. That is why Ravana has been described as inauspicious—a demon and an evil spirit, because he insisted on disregarding Rama and died without accepting Him. Then he had to die at the hands of God. This is a story. It does not mean that the effigy of Ravana is made with an idea of taking revenge. The lesson I draw from it is that it teaches man not to take revenge. Who would be more arrogant and foolish than I if I imagined myself to be Rama and other people sitting around here to be Ravana's? How do I know I am Rama? Who knows how much wickedness is hidden in me? Nobody knows whether I am a mahatma 'or a wicked person in the eyes of God. I myself do not quite know how wicked or good I may be. God alone knows it. He is far above us and sees everything. Nothing is hidden from Him. Man cannot take revenge on anyone. Even if someone has done any harm, what is the point in taking revenge on him? Imagine a man as being perfect, though man can never be perfect, for God alone can be perfect, but supposing there is one human being who is perfect while others are imperfect, should he then punish others or slay them? According to me, the making of Ravana's effigy on the Vijayadashami day means that it is not up to human beings to take revenge. Even if we do not call it revenge, God alone can harm or kill. Does it then mean that it is only for God to employ violence as well as non-violence? God has no attributes and is beyond all properties. To Him all these things mean nothing. But this story is an illustration which points out that God alone can



destroy all the Ravana in the world. Some people also presume that Vijaydashmi tells them that they are perfect and others are imperfect. Hence they take the law into their own hands and become the lords of the world and start injuring and slaughtering people.

All this is happening in India, too, because we have lost our senses. From the reply I have given, you and the gentleman who put the question will have understood that the Rama Ravana story teaches us that we should not become sinful but be virtuous. Taking the name of Rama on the one hand and indulging in acts of sin on the other is abusing God.

Now some of you can ask me whether, while I am taking of these things at such length, I am aware of what is happening in Kashmir. (On October 23, about 2,000 Afridis and tribesmen had invaded the Kashmir State and indulged in large-scale loot, arson and murder.) Yes, I am quite aware of it. But I know only what has appeared in the newspapers. If all those reports are correct it is really a bad situation. All I can say is that we can neither save our religion nor ourselves in this manner. It is reported that Pakistan is trying to coerce Kashmir to join Pakistan. This should not be so. It is not possible to take anything from anyone by force. I have no doubt about it at all. Today it is Kashmir. Tomorrow it can be Hyderabad. Next it may come to forcing Junagadh or some other State. I do not wish to sit in judgment on this issue. I only believe in the principle that nobody can force anyone.

It makes no difference to me whether it is the question of Kashmir or Hyderabad or Junagadh. Let no one be forced into anything. Let there be no coercion. But I must respectfully submit that today Kashmir is not ruled by its Maharaja. In other States too there are no Princes as we used to know them. They were the creation of the British. Now the British have gone. They had installed them as rulers because they could rule through them and exercise power. Kashmir has still to establish popular rule in the State. The same is the case with other States like Hyderabad and Junagadh. In my view there is no difference between them. Real rulers of the States are its people. If the people of Kashmir are in favour of opting for Pakistan, no power on earth can stop them from doing so. But they should be left free to decide for themselves. The people cannot be attacked and forced by burning their villages. If the people of Kashmir, in spite of its Muslim majority, wish to accede to India no one can stop them.

The Pakistan Government should stop its people if they are going there to force the people of Kashmir. If it fails to do that, it will have to shoulder the entire blame. If



the people of the Indian Union are going there to force the Kashmiris, they should be stopped, too, and they should stop by themselves. About this I have no doubt at all.

I have discussed the problem of Kashmir with you. Now let me pass on to another point. I have received a telegram from Calcutta. I think I had told you about a Shanti Sena which was formed in Calcutta while I was there. That was indeed a grace of God. It had appeared very difficult to establish peace in Calcutta. But once the Shanti Sena was formed, it was easily done, and neither the Hindus nor the Muslims had to suffer much. Before that the Muslims had taken control of big localities and were driving away the Hindus from there. Then the Hindus also burnt the huts and other belongings of the Muslims and also terrorized them. That should not have happened. I do not want to go into the whole story. But when I went there, by the grace of God the Shanti Sena was organized and students and others joined it. Now they write to say that both Dussehra and Id were celebrated with great enthusiasm and the Hindus and the Muslims have started living like brothers. It was celebrated in Calcutta yesterday. But it is being celebrated in Delhi today. So the telegram has been sent to me mentioning both Dussehra and Id. They say that the Shanti Sena had spread out all over. There was no damage done anywhere, either in Calcutta or Howrah. Nobody was in a position to harass anyone. And people lived without trouble on both days. They had even gone towards Dacca in East Bengal. I thought I should tell you about this thing because I am happy if somewhere in India the animosity between the Hindus and the Muslims ceases and instead of remaining enemies they start living as brothers. And then Calcutta is no small village. It is a city where business worth crores is carried on. Huge freighters come to the Calcutta port and the city is inhabited by the Hindus and the Muslims who do business. If we started treating one another as enemies there, would not the entire trade be destroyed? It is indeed very good if the Shanti Sena has taught the people of Calcutta to live as brothers. Why should we not learn a lesson from Calcutta? Why should we not have a Shanti Sena here as well? Some Muslims came to me today on account of Id. They know that I am not their enemy but their friend. I am a Hindu, and a sanatani Hindu at that. That is why I am as much a Muslim as a Hindu. Hence they came to me as a friend. I did offer them Eid greetings; but I told them that really I had not the face to do so. Even today they live in great fear. They wonder if the Hindus would let them stay here. Or would they be killed? Of course all the Hindus do not kill. But they are in panic because many have been slaughtered. What if they are few in number? Should the people of the majority community attack and terrorize them? These atrocities have got to end, otherwise we will perish.



How nice it will be if we can do here what has happened in Calcutta. Then my heart will dance with joy. Today my heart bleeds. I cannot shed tears, because if I do so I shall not be able to do what I want to. But there is sorrow in my heart. Are the Hindus and the Muslims going to live like this in independent India? It is barbarous if people belonging to the majority community attack the minority community. No religion can be saved by attacking others. Religion can be saved only by practising its teachings in life. There is no other way.

I have received a telegram from Ratlam saying that the Ratlam Maharaja has made an announcement (On October 24, 1947; vide “Harijans in Ratlam”, 9-11-1947.) about establishing responsible self-government in the State. The Maharaja would be like a trustee of the State. The Secretary of the Harijan Sevak Sangh has written to me that now no distinction will be made in the State between the Harijans and other people. Along with the high castes, the Harijans also entered the Maharaja’s temple. From now on untouchability will cease to exist in all the State temples. And the Harijans will also be able to draw water from the public wells. I was very happy to know about all these things. If Hinduism has to make progress, how can hatred and untouchability have any place in it? Untouchables are those who are sinful. It is indeed a great stigma to make an entire community untouchable. All traces of untouchability should be removed from the heart of every Hindu. From every State ruled by the Hindus untouchability should be removed as it is done in Ratlam. We would be raising Hinduism very high thereby. If untouchability as we understand it is banished from our hearts, are we going to make the Muslims or some other people untouchables? What we are suffering today is the consequence of the evil of untouchability. That is why these developments in Ratlam have made me happy, and so I decided to speak to you about the good things that have happened at Calcutta and Ratlam.

[From Hindi] Prarthana Pravachan—I, pp. 465-70



31. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

(As Gandhiji was observing silence his written speech was read out after the prayer.)

NEW DELHI,

October 27, 1947

Complaints are being repeatedly made that Muslims are being forced to leave their ancestral homes in the Union and migrate to Pakistan. Thus it is said that in a variety of ways they are being made to vacate their houses and live in camps to await dispatch by train or even on foot. I am quite sure that such is not the policy of the Cabinet. When I tell the complainants about this they laugh at it and tell me in reply that either my information is incorrect or the Services do not carry out the policy. I know that my information is quite correct. Are the Services then disloyal? I hope not. Yet the complaint is universal. Various reasons are given for the alleged disloyalty. The most plausible one is that the military and the police are largely divided on a communal basis and that their members are carried away by the prevalent prejudice.

I have given my opinion that if these members on whom depends the preservation of law and order are affected by the communal taint, orderly Government must give place to disorder and if the latter persists, to disruption of society. It is up to the upper ranks of these Services to rise superior to communalism and then to infect the lower ranks with the same healthy spirit.

It is suggested with much force that the popular Governments established in the country have not the prestige that the ability to overawe the Indian members of the Services gave the foreign bureaucracy. This is only partly true. For the popular Government wields a moral force which is infinitely superior to the physical force that the foreign Government could summon to its assistance. This moral force presupposes the possession of political morale that popular support would give to an indigenous Government. It may be lacking today. There is no means of checking it save by the resignation of the Ministry at the Centre.

What we are examining specially this evening is the condition of the Central authority. It must never be and, what is perhaps more important, never feel weak. It must be conscious of its strength. Therefore if it is at all true that there is the slightest insubordination among the Services, the guilty ones must go; or the Ministry or the



Minister-in-charge must resign and give place to the one who would successfully deal with official disorderliness.

Whilst I voice, not without hesitation, the complaints that persistently come to me, I must cling to the hope that they have no basis and that if they have, the superior authority will satisfactorily deal with them in so far as they have any justification.

What is the duty of the affected citizens of the Union? It is clear that there is no law that can compel a citizen to leave his place of residence. The authority will have to arm itself with special powers to issue orders such as are alleged to have been given. So far as I am aware there are no written orders issued to anyone. In the present case thousands are involved in the alleged verbal orders. There is no helping those who will be frightened into submission to any order given by a person in uniform. My emphatic advice to all such persons is that they should ask for written orders whose validity in case of doubt should be tested in a court of justice, if appeal to the final executive fails to give satisfaction.

The public, in this case representing the majority community (that hateful expression), should rigidly refrain from taking the law into their own hands. If they do not, they will be cutting the very branch on which they are sitting. It will be a fall from which it will be difficult to rise. Let wisdom dawn on them while there is still time. Let them not be swayed by ugly events even when the report thereof happens to be true. They must trust the representative Ministers to do the needful for the vindication of justice.

The Hindustan Times, 28-10-1947, and Harijan, 9-11-1947



32. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

NEW DELHI,

October 28, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

A gentleman from Delhi writes: “I had taken some screens and tents from a Muslim gentleman for the refugees. He has now gone away from here. Where should I keep them now?” He is a gentleman and that is why he is asking what he should do with those things. He is right. Since that man has gone away, should we appropriate those things to ourselves? But I do not have any arrangement for keeping them. This matter concerns the Home Department. The Sardar should have been consulted. Or the matter should have been referred to anyone who is handling it. Or Neogy Saheb (K.C. Neogy, Minister for Refugees and Rehabilitation, Government of India) who has been appointed for the purpose should be consulted. If he can find the whereabouts of that Muslim gentleman, these things or their worth in money will have to be sent to him.

A few young men from the Aligarh University came to me. Some students from West Punjab and North-West Frontier Province also study in that University. They could not reach the University and those who are here cannot leave the place. Why should they not be able to move freely? Now that Pakistan has been formed, does it mean that the Muslims should go there and the Hindus and the Sikhs should come here? The students wish to collect the blankets, etc., from Muslims and distribute them among Hindu and Sikh refugees who are facing hardships in the camps. Their intention is good and the refugees need them too. If they receive these things, it would also be an expression of love from Muslims. But really speaking, they should go to Pakistan and ask the Muslims why the Hindus and the Sikhs have to leave their homes at all. I have with me a whole pile of papers full of complaints. Those complaints are not unfounded. Of course I do feel that some exaggeration is quite possible in them. But even if there is exaggeration, there is substantial ground for those complaints. Why should the Hindus run away from their places? Call them back. Why should they not come and live in their own places? If the students are able to do this we can show to the whole world that we had never indulged in mutual fighting. Then we shall regain our honour which is sullied today. This is what I have told those boys. They have agreed to what I have said. God alone knows what they are going to do later on.



But what I want to tell you today is something very important. I think that while I was in Bihar people used to think that since they had won freedom there was no need to buy tickets for travelling by train. Not only this. They sometimes indulged in acts of high-handedness and coercion. People did not indulge in mutual fighting in those days, but now they think that having won their freedom they need nothing more. I wrote quite a bit on the subject and it did have some effect and such practices were given up. But now for the past few days the situation has developed so that all over the country people have started travelling without tickets. Even well-to-do people have started thinking that they have become the owners of the trains. The railways certainly belong to us now; but the practice of ticketless travelling has resulted in a loss of Rs. 8 crores. And Rs. 8 crores is no small sum. Even Rs. 1 crore is no small sum. How difficult it was and how many people had to go round when we had to collect Rs. 1 crore for the Congress! I too went round from house to house with the others to collect the funds. With great difficulty we were able to collect that amount. The people of our country are so poor. Today we spend a crore of rupees in no time. If we get it we don't even notice how it is spent. We still do not know how to spend. We spend just because we have been put in charge of the work. If people start having free rides in trains or do not buy tickets when travelling in connection with work, it is a kind of violence. In my view it is plain robbery. At this rate India will be reduced to utter poverty and we shall be left without railways or anything else. Then we shall feel sorry wondering how we can travel. Eight crore rupees do not make a small sum after all. In former days the railways could earn interest on their capital out of their earnings. Millions of people travel by trains. If everybody pays his fare the railways can earn quite a lot. There used to be ticketless travellers even in those days; but not in thousands as today. There used to be inspectors on the trains and the accounts used to be properly kept. But now the situation is such that the guards and the drivers are attacked. Expenditure is going up day by day. Trains cannot be run for charity. The railway employees cannot agree to forgo their salaries because the passengers do not pay their fares. What will they eat if they do not have their salaries? Thus the expenditure on railways is millions and it also earns millions. The railways incurred no loss in those days. Earnings from third-class passengers used to be considerable, because the expenditure on them used to be little. But I was pained to hear yesterday about the loss of Rs. 8 crores. Nothing good can come to us if there is going to be such looting all sides. On top of this we indulge in mutual fighting and killing and plundering. These things do no good to anyone and result in loss of crores of rupees. When people are asked to leave their



homes and go away to Pakistan, they surely do not go without taking anything. They have to be fed and clothed. We have to incur all that expenditure for nothing. After all, India is not a country of the rich that it can go on spending at this rate. That is impossible. Hence even if there is a single person travelling by train, let him not travel without paying his fare. He must pay his fare. During the British days, police constables and other officials used to swallow up a considerable amount of money. I know about this because I have been a third-class traveller. In those days when I had gone to Haridwar (In April, 1915, for volunteer service organized by Hriday Nath Kunzru, under the auspices of the Servants of India Society) for the Kumbh Mela, I found that nobody could get there without paying some extra money to the station master. In this way, thousands of rupees went by way of bribes. Now I feel that everybody has become quite honest. The station masters, signalmen, inspectors, guards, etc., should take only their legitimate dues and live only by that. They should not grab money from people. The passengers should consider the railways as their own property. They should keep the trains clean. They should not spit and smoke in the trains and should not pull the chain without real need. And not a single passenger should travel without a ticket. Then I would be able to say that we have attained true independence. Here there are not thousands of people to hear me, and so who would carry my words to those hundreds of thousands of people who travel by trains? Had I been a railway manager or a railway minister I would have given orders to people working under me to tell the passengers that though they would not be physically manhandled, the railways belonged to them and the railway officials were their servants, they would not be permitted to travel without paying the fares. Even if the train is passing through a forest, the railway authorities would stop the train right there. If the passengers still did not come round they would order the driver to detach the engine from the train and drive it away. Then there would be no occasion for abusing people or using force against them; the train just would not move till the passengers paid the fare. This method should be followed as long as the passengers travel without tickets. After all, it is not proper to board the train without tickets, to indulge in violence and stop the train just anywhere one likes. What I have told you is happening in India. But I have heard that in Pakistan too people travel in trains without tickets just as here. And why should they not do so? After all we were all born in the same environment, have eaten the same salt, then why should not the same things happen there as here? But if things continue in this manner, both the countries will go bankrupt. If we travel by train without buying tickets, take bribes wherever we can and go on beating up people, we will end up as robbers. The respect



we have acquired by becoming independent will be completely lost. Hence let as many people as possible and the Minister listen to what I am saying, because I am saying as an experienced man, that if this trend does not stop you will have to stop running the trains. The trains will not move and in the trains that move no passenger will be allowed to travel without paying his fare.

[From Hindi] Prarthana Pravachan—II, pp. 7-11



33. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

NEW DELHI,

October 29, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

Today you have heard a very sweet bhajan. The person who sang that beautiful bhajan may not be known to all of you. His name is Dilip Kumar Roy. He has visited many places. Few persons in India possess the melodious voice he has. I would even say that very few in the world have a voice like his. He came to me in the afternoon. I could not spare much time then. I could give just 10 minutes. He sang Vandemataram, which he has set to music, in his melodious voice. He must know this song because he is a Bengali. I heard him because he wanted to sing for me. I am no expert in music. He has an affection for me which people mutually develop. Then he sang for me Sare jahanse achchha of Iqbal. He has set that also to a new tune. I enjoyed it very much. He has been staying at Rishi Aurobindo's Ashram at Pondicherry for the past several years. He has not taken any training there. He has been a musician even when he went there. Later he developed his art.

The inner meaning of the bhajan is as Kabir says: "While you possess elephants and horses and wealth worth crores, my only possession is the name of Murari (One of the appellations of Lord Krishna). But having that name I am rich and all the wealth lying in your possession is worthless. That wealth is transient. But what I possess can never be taken away from me. The bhajan only shows the greatness of Ramanama. And what the bhajan says you have already heard. But you must also know about the Aurobindo Ashram. As it is, there is a continuous stream of visitors to the Ashram. A large number of people go there. Shri Aurobindo has many devotees. There is no hatred for anyone there, whether Hindu or Muslim or somebody else. I have seen that the late Sir Akbar Hydari used to visit the Ashram every year. Shri Aurobindo is a humble devotee. He does not meet anyone. But people visit him, whether they can or cannot have his darshan. They also entertain no feeling of hatred for anyone. Let us learn at least this much that we should not have hatred for anyone.

But today I wish to talk about what is happening in Kashmir. And I must talk about it. You already know what is appearing in the newspapers. It is an astounding story. It happened three days ago. Nobody knew anything about it. Even I did not know



what was going to happen. But one might say what has happened has happened. At the moment it is being said that the Afridis, and others have infiltrated there carrying arms with them. Some people even say that it is a mischief done by the Pakistan Government. It may be so, but I am not concerned with it. I am observing what is happening there. On the one side the invaders have gone right up to Punj and have further reached within 22 miles of Srinagar. From there it is a straight road with no obstructions for them.

When the Maharaja of Kashmir saw this he announced his decision to accede to the Indian Union. The Maharaja wrote a letter to Lord Mountbatten who welcomed his decision. (Maharaja Hari Singh had signed the Instrument of Accession of Jammu and Kashmir State on October 27.) Now that he has taken refuge in the Indian Union he should be protected. But how could protection be given to him? Help could not be sent by road, but only by air. How many soldiers could be sent by plane? Only a few could be sent. Then they have to carry their arms, food supplies and clothes. And their clothes have got to be thick and heavy. Even an excess of one pound of weight becomes an extra burden. When the planes fly in the sky like birds, how many soldiers can go in them? About 1,000 or at the most 1,500 would have gone. On the one hand there are 1,500 soldiers and on the other a large number of men who have come from the North-West Frontier Province. Those men are also of a fighting stock and they are fighting. What can you or I think about it? After all, I have spent my life thinking over these things. I do not believe in armed fighting but I must know what it is. On the one hand are 1,500 Indian soldiers and on the other all those Afridis and others. And there is Sheikh Abdullah. He is called the “Lion of Kashmir”. That is, he is like a tiger or a lion. He is a sturdy man. You must have seen his photograph. I know him and his Begum also. She is here these days. He is doing whatever a single individual can do. He is not a soldier. There are strong and sturdy Muslims in Kashmir and also strong and sturdy Hindus, Rajputs and Sikhs. So he has decided to do his utmost. He is a Muslim. Kashmir has a large Muslim population. From here the soldiers have gone fully armed but what should the local Muslims do? Granted that we have all become barbarians— whether here or in Pakistan, no act of madness is left undone—should the people in Kashmir also turn barbarians and indulge in indiscriminate killing of women and children? Should Kashmir be reduced to such a terrible state? Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and his Cabinet came to the conclusion that something should be done and those soldiers were sent. What should they do? Let them fight to the end and die fighting. The job of armed soldiers is to march ahead and repel the attacking enemy. They die in fighting but



never retreat. God alone knows what the outcome will be. As it is stated in the bhajan, our only wealth is Murari. Our wealth does not consist in money piled up in crores. Even the arms are not our wealth. Whatever is to be done is done only by God. But our duty is to make efforts. And that we should do. So these 1,500 soldiers have made an effort. But they will have really done their duty when all of them lay down their lives in saving Srinagar. And with Srinagar the whole of Kashmir would be saved. What would happen after that?

All that would happen would be that Kashmir would belong to the Kashmiris. I fully agree with Sheikh Abdullah who says that Kashmir belongs to the Kashmiris and not to the Maharaja. But the Maharaja has given all powers to Sheikh Abdullah, leaving it to the Sheikh's discretion to do whatever should be done and save Kashmir if he can. After all, Kashmir cannot be saved by the Maharaja. If anyone can save Kashmir, it is only the Muslims, the Kashmiri Pandits, the Rajputs and the Sikhs who can do so. Sheikh Abdullah has affectionate and friendly relations with all of them. It is possible that while saving Kashmir, Sheikh Abdullah would have to sacrifice his life, his Begum and his daughter would have to die and all women of Kashmir would have to die. And, if that happens, I am not going to shed a single tear. If we are fated to have a war, there will be a war. God alone knows, if it is going to be a war between the two only or others too would be involved. If the aggressors have no support or encouragement of Pakistan, I do not know how they can hold on. Maybe, there is no such encouragement. If the people of Kashmir die in the fighting, who would be left behind? Sheikh Abdullah would have gone, because his lion-heartedness consists in dying while fighting and saving Kashmir to his last breath. He would have saved the Muslims and also the Sikhs and the Hindus. The Sheikh is a devout Muslim. His wife also offers Namaaz. She had recited Auz-o Billahi to me in her melodious voice. I have even gone to his house. He would not let the Hindus and the Sikhs there die before the Muslims. What if the Hindus and the Sikhs are in a minority there? If this is the attitude of the Sheikh and if he has influence on the Muslims, all is well with us. The poison which has spread amongst us should never have spread. Through Kashmir that poison might be removed from us. If they make such a sacrifice in Kashmir to remove that poison, then our eyes also would be opened. The tribesmen are only interested in killing. So they invaded Kashmir and even showed their strength. I know all who are with them. But the result would be that if all the Hindus and Muslims of Kashmir sacrificed their lives, that would open our eyes also. Then we would know that not all Muslims were insincere and bad, there were some good men also among them. Similarly it is not true



that all Hindus and Sikhs are either good and saintly or worthless and kafirs. I believe that there are good people among all, Hindus and Muslims and Sikhs. And it is due to these good people that the world goes on—not due to the people carrying arms.

This is the substance of the melodious bhajan we have heard today. I shall dance with joy even if everybody in Kashmir has to die in defending his land. There would be no sorrow in my heart. The world would go on as usual. All this is the play of God. But we have always to make the effort and that consists in dying while doing the right thing.

[From Hindi] Prarthana Pravachan—II, pp. 12-6



34. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

NEW DELHI

October 30, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

I was aware of what had been happening here. It hurt me very much. Here I wish to make it clear that Birla Bhavan is the house of a private individual. Nothing unbecoming should happen here. Those who wish to come are welcome, but after coming here it is not good manners to raise any objection. Today a gentleman said that he would not allow the prayer to take place. I wonder whether I should hold the prayer at all under the circumstances. The person who raised the objection went away because you told him to go. He returned and left again. This is not a good thing for me. It means that he is pained at heart. That way I think many of you must be in pain because a portion from the Koran is included in the prayer. But I am helpless because it is an inseparable part of my prayer. Do you think I shall not pray if the prayer is not held here? On the one hand my duty tells me that I should pray. It is not that I shall cease to pray if I do not hold the prayer here. I shall pray even if there is none in the world to stand by me. One can pray within one's heart. Here I have to think from the point of view of non-violence. I must see my duty only in that light. I do not like that a man should go away in order that I might hold the prayer. I do not wish to hold the prayer today, nor enter into an argument, still I will because we are passing through a critical time and people are eager to hear what Gandhi has to say. I also wish to speak so that at least people might understand what I wish to tell them. But today I will not enter into an argument, because I am helpless.

I must decide whether I should discontinue the prayer and only continue the discussion. It is a big question. I shall have to think about it. Today I do not wish to say anything on this or argue about it. If I carry on the discussion I will have to leave out the prayer. I will issue a Press statement in this connection.

I came in when I saw that you people had arrived. My culture and non-violence tell me that I should reveal my heart to you and let you know who I am. For me, there is nothing in this world except truth and non-violence. If you realize the meaning of truth and nonviolence, great things can be done in the world. I do not wish to indulge in any big talk. Great things happen in the world. But who can change the Law of God?



And God cannot change the laws of the world. I think we are all steeped in pride and ignorance and hence believe that truth is too great a thing to be applied to trade and business and in practical life. We wonder how non-violence can work. It is asked when somebody abuses twice, why not abuse him at least once and if somebody abuses why not retort by slapping him? But if we follow such a path, we can make no progress. And we do want to make progress. This, according to me, is the purpose of human life. I cannot remain still. Only God is immovable. But it is stated in the Upanishads that though God is immovable he is also moving. He is always moving—and He moves in such a way that that motion gives the impression of stillness. Did we know that the sun is stationary and the earth moves? But now we have learnt that what appears to be moving is stationary. Such is the creation of God. God alone is immovable and also moving. We are never still. We are always moving, and since we are moving we have to go ahead. We come out of our mother's womb and grow. In the course of time we grow old. That is the way of life. One who is born has to grow and march forward and he does go forward. Some people think old age is decline. But that is not my view. Old age is like the ripened fruit. That which is destroyed is body, not soul. The soul does not perish, nor does it decay. The soul is always in a process of evolution. And in this world we cannot live without truth and non-violence. Even today I claim that truth and non-violence should be learnt even by children. If the mother learns these things she can teach them to her children also. The mother cannot learn these things in an instant. But it is said that man has been in existence from the beginning of time, since millions and millions of years. We should consider our progress in that context. For that we must have patience. I do not wish to say anything more on this point; but nothing can be done without truth and non-violence. We cannot make any progress without them.

I do not wish to enter into a discussion today. You would be coming tomorrow also. If tomorrow also anyone raises an objection to the recitation from the Koran I shall decide whether I should discuss the matter. If anyone has got an objection he will say so, otherwise they will say that they will have both the prayer and the speech. But the others should know that they should not get angry. If later some body decides not to allow the people to listen to the prayer and starts shouting, maybe your violence will be provoked, and my nonviolence will be put to test. It will also show how far you can go with me. If you will stand by me and adhere to non-violence, I can say with certainty that violence cannot remain unaffected before non-violence. But the condition is that you must do as I say. You must tell me that you will exercise restraint



and will not be carried away by anger. That gentleman who protests against the recitation from the Koran is ignorant. What harm has the Koran-e-Sharif done? If the Muslims here have gone astray it does not mean that the Koran is at fault. The Koran written in Arabic is sublime and eternal. I do not think anyone can be more ignorant than one who shows contempt for the Koran. You must convince the man who objects, in this manner. Of course, if somebody says that he does not want to listen to the prayer at all, I will have the prayer and also make the speech. But I cannot tolerate that you should beat up anybody because I discontinue the prayer. If I am left alone and five people come up to me wanting to kill me, I would say that my head is ready for them. I would ask why there should be five people to do that. Even a single man could cut my throat. But still I would hold the prayer. When one's heart is filled with such feelings, one would neither kill a person nor be angry with him. Even if the person raising an objection, whom we could call an uncultured man, shouts at the top of his voice, we will have our prayer. Tomorrow we shall have the prayer as well as the speech. If anyone raises an objection tomorrow, let him do so and leave. I do not wish to ruin myself for his sake. I can carry on my work only by controlling my anger and being patient. Today this is all I wish to say. Now please go home quietly without arguing among yourselves. Think over this at home.

[From Hindi] Prarthana Pravachan—II, pp. 16-20



35. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

NEW DELHI,

October 31, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

In my view, disappointing 300 persons for the sake of two or three is also a kind of violence. These people certainly have a right to protest, but courtesy demands that they should not exercise that right in this place which personally belongs to Birla. But who can stop them if they do so? In that case, the remaining members of the audience must put up with them. Let them not be angry with the persons who are protesting or say anything to them either here or outside. I shall carry on the prayer and the recitation from the Koran if you are agreeable to this. Because you are in the majority, you should not think that you can ignore the people who are protesting. If you think you can ignore them, you would be following the path of violence. We must be more concerned about the people who are in the minority. This is what I have been trying to teach all along. In future too I shall, above anything else, try to teach how non-violence works.

The basic principles of truth and non-violence are not difficult to understand. No special degree is needed to learn those principles. Why talk of English, we need not learn even our own mother tongue for it. Whatever is needed for the purpose we learn from our parents in childhood. Practising those principles is even easier. Hence, if you can put up with this much of protest, I shall have the prayer in spite of the protest. Courtesy demands that if anyone is against the recitation from the Koran, he should express his view and leave; he may explain to me later in what way I am harming the Hindu religion. I am a sensible man. If, therefore he is able to convince me, I shall accept his view. Personally, I think I have only done some good to Hinduism. I am not doing this only today—I have been doing this for a long time and, I think, Hinduism has not been tarnished in any way. Through this practice of reciting from the Koran I am able to draw my Muslim friends nearer to me. I have not done anything wrong in this. How nice it would be if I could in the same manner draw the whole world to me and there were none who was my enemy or opponent! But how can that be? I am not so perfect that no one can protest against me. But let me at least learn to put up with those who oppose me. If you also learn to put up with their protest, say nothing to them and accept them with goodwill, they will think that you are all gentlemen. If all



of us can follow this path, there is no doubt that the face of India will change. That is why I am asking you if you will put up with these people. Let the police also say nothing to them. (The audience expressed its approval and then the prayer was held. After the prayer Gandhiji thanked the objectors for remaining silent and also complimented the rest of the gathering for tolerating their protests.)

If things go on like this, the result is bound to be good. In today's prayer Shri Dilip Kumar Roy sang: "Let there be love in the temple of your heart." I was pleased by his melodious voice and his art of singing. The sentiment expressed is nothing uncommon but the way it was presented is what we call art. The bhajan says that we should make our heart like a temple and install love in it. So this also teaches us non-violence. The composer of this bhajan asks man why he should behave like a foolish and ignorant man. He says that if one can light the lamp of love even if only in the temple of one's heart, one will have won the goal of one's life. After that he will see light and brightness in the whole world. There will be no darkness anywhere. Similar miraculous power is to be found in truth and nonviolence. This is a very simple and obvious thing. But if we learn even this much, our task in the world will become easier.

I found in Noakhali that the rich had run away from there, leaving the poor behind. The villages in that area are full of people whom we, in our foolishness, call untouchables. As I have toured the area, I know that the people there are very much in distress. The women in that place had even forgotten to wear bangles or apply sindoor (Vermilion mark, sign of married status). Even among the people who have come here from Punjab and elsewhere I have found that the people with financial resources somehow carry on some occupation or the other. They have money and they also acquire friends. But what can the poor do? Where can they go? In Noakhali there were only the Hindus who were in distress; but in Bihar I found the Muslims also in distress. I told them that those who were dead among them were dead and gone and those who had money and wished to go away could do so, but as for the poor, God alone was their protector. But God does not work with His own hands or mouth. He inspires people and gets His work done through them. But should the rich become such hard-hearted materialists that they should forget God altogether and regard mammon as their God? The rich fled from that place and the poor who are left behind write to me that I should do at least something for them. They look up to me because I have worked for the poor for many years. But what can I do? I have neither strength nor power. But I know about their situation just because they keep me informed.



There are a large number of poor people in the refugee camps in Delhi. There are some rich people too and among them there are some nice people who first feed the poor before eating themselves. That is why I say that the people who have come here should not discriminate between the rich and the poor. If the rich look upon the poor with contempt they will be not religious but irreligious. That is why I would plainly say that the rich should keep the poor along with them. Then alone can we live together in peace and unity.

Recently a European couple visited some of our camps. They were happy to have seen those camps. They said that though there were distinctions between the rich and the poor, the people lived well all the same. The couple have come here only with the intention of serving. If we all work with the name of God on our lips, the refugees from the Punjab would mingle with the people of Delhi even as sugar dissolves in milk.

There are still a large number of Muslims in Delhi. I have seen a list today which, if there is no exaggeration, indicates that hundreds of Muslims have been forcibly converted to Hinduism or Sikhism. I would like to tell the people who have been subjected to forcible religious conversion that even though they have changed their Muslim appearance, if God is installed in their hearts there is no need to shave off their beards or to keep a tuft of hair. Those who wish to read the Gita of their own accord may do so by all means. It should be in the spirit in which I read the Koran and derive inner joy. But if somebody compelled me to read the Koran and threatened me with death if I did not oblige, I would say that I had no need of the Koran even if it contained jewels. That is why I would tell those Muslims who have become Hindus or Sikhs that they must stick to their religion. If we compel them to follow our religion, we are destroying Hinduism. Such a thing cannot go on in India forever, and if it does, it will ruin us, and we will lose our independence. I have no doubt that in that case our independence will have become a mere dream. That is why I would like to tell all the Muslims here that they should live without fear. Those who have changed their religion should say that they were in panic at that time, but now they have realized that people who have faith in God are never afraid, and, if at all, they are afraid only of God. It is a good thing to be afraid of God because He is the abode of love, an ocean of compassion. If we are afraid of God we are blessed. But we should never be afraid of man. Hence they would say that they would rather die than change their religion.



They can tell the Hindus that the latter might send them to Pakistan if they wished, but cannot drive them out through force.

It is agreed between Liaquat Ali and our Prime Minister that those who wish to go to Pakistan are free to leave, but even Liaquat Ali, the Sardar and Jawaharlal cannot force anybody. There is no such law. So we should keep with love the Muslims who are here. If I am alive, I do not wish to see anything else. There was a time when I cherished the desire to live for 125 years; but now I have given up that desire. If India is destined for bad times, let God take me away. And if India is destined to be great and the situation is going to change, as it should, let God change the hearts of the Muslims and fill them with thoughts of God. They do take the name of God but they are not doing His work. Similarly, if the Hindus take the name of Krishna or Rama but indulge in killing, their taking those names has no meaning.

Some people say the war has started and they wonder what is going to happen in Kashmir. I say nothing is going to happen. The people of Kashmir are brave. The Hindus, Muslims and the Sikhs are living there in unity. The invaders should be told by the Kashmiris that they should go back to their homes. If they are going to attack, they will have to march on their dead bodies. They cannot win Srinagar so easily. Then nobody will touch our soldiers there. If they die, they will become immortal. Then we can dance with joy and sing. If such a situation arises there, I would ask Shri Dilip Kumar Roy to sing such a bhajan that people would start dancing—because those who would have died would become immortal and those surviving would be as good as dead. I would not be pained at all about this. Of course, I would be pained if people here lost their senses and Pakistan also went mad. The Afridis are like our brothers and the North-West Frontier Province is our own. Then why should they indulge in such acts? We should know who is giving them help. I would only pray that God may dwell in their hearts and the temples of their hearts be illumined with the flame of love. Then the darkness around us will vanish and we will see light all round. This is my prayer. May you all join me in my prayer that such light should pervade both India and Pakistan that people live together in mutual love. Then we may concentrate our efforts to produce food and clothing which are scarce in the country today. Let us forget that there was ever any animosity among us, and become friends. I only wish that we may devote ourselves to this task.

[From Hindi] Prarthana Pravachan—II, pp. 20-6



36. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

NEW DELHI,
November 1, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

Brajkishan tells me that the gentleman who protested yesterday is protesting today also. I like his protest and at the same time I do not like it. I like it because of its peaceful and dignified nature. If he disapproves of something, why should he not express it? And you too maintained silence here and outside and did not argue with him. So, from that point of view I liked the protest. But what pains me is that he is not convinced by what I explained yesterday with such humility and firmness. It was not such a difficult matter after all, and could be grasped by people with ordinary intelligence. But when a person is angry at heart, I feel happy when that anger is expressed in a peaceful manner. That is why I am happy as well as sad. I take it for granted and hope that today also you will not show any anger and treat him with love as you had done yesterday. Then of course I would start my prayer. I do not see any harm when people protest with such politeness. Such a protest would carry for us a lesson in peace and we would learn how the lofty principle of non-violence works. If we continue to behave like this, we will realize what miraculous strength ahimsa possesses. (After this the prayer went off peacefully. Dilip Kumar Roy sang the bhajan, “We belong to a land where there is no sorrow and no sigh.”)

Today also you heard a bhajan in the same melodious voice. Is it not said in the bhajan that “we belong to a land where there is no sorrow and no suffering”? Then the bhajan also says that “there is no illusion and no greed, and such other enemies of ours are also not there”. But where can we find such a land? On an earlier occasion when Sucheta Devi (Sucheta Kripalani; in-charge, Foreign Department in A.I.C.C.; Joint Secretary, Kasturba Gandhi National Memorial Trust; Member, Constituent Assembly; President, Delhi Central Refugee Committee; Minister of Labour, U.P., 1962; Chief Minister, U. P., 1963) had sung that bhajan for us I had given two interpretations. (Vide “Speech at Prayer Meeting”, 17-5-1946 and “Speech at Prayer Meeting”, 22-5-1946.) My first interpretation was that the poet had India in his mind. He had a wish, a dream of what he would like his country to be. But that is not the situation at present. The bhajan was composed before August 15, but such was not the condition even then. Anger, greed, attachment, pride, infatuation, jealousy, all these six enemies of man were there. There six include all other enemies



of humankind. Then there was hunger and there was poverty and there were no clothes to wear—we were then surrounded by all those troubles. But did the poet not wish that his country should be free from those troubles? But how could our country be free from these troubles? This calls for the second interpretation. Is this not the country which has been described in the Gita as Kurukshetra (Literally ‘field of Kuru’—the scene of war between the Kauravas and the Pandavas. Symbolically it means a battlefield.) as well as Dharmakshetra (The field of duty; Ch. I, 1). If our mind is the temple of God then it is dharmakshetra, but if the mind gives itself up to self-indulgence it becomes Kurukshetra, a battlefield. We have innumerable enemies like the Kauravas (The hundred sons of Dhritarashtra. The Kauravas represent the forces of evil.) whose father was blind. But isn’t Yudhishtira (The eldest of the five Pandava brothers, known for his righteousness. The Pandavas represent the forces of good.) the symbol of dharmakshetra? That is why Yudhishtira was named Dharmaraja. Such is our land where there is no sorrow and no suffering. We can all be like this; but have I not mentioned the conditions we have to fulfil to be so? Then ours would be the land where God resides. Later on, the poet has also called it swadesh and swaraj. And he is right. After independence India would be a country without misery and sorrow. But I have never found our country in a poorer state than today. Even the history that I have read from my childhood days does not depict India as I find her today. This *bhajan* is intended only to end that situation. It is said in the *bhajan* that everything will be well if we make our mind a temple and install God in it.

While there are people who are hungry and have nothing to wear, here we are seated fully clothed. I have also wrapped myself in a sheet so that I may not feel cold. A lady doctor came to me today. She came from Kurukshetra (More than twenty-five thousand Hindu and Sikh refugees were living in the refugee camp at Kurukshetra.). She had been doing a lot of work in the Punjab. She had been nursing Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and the rest. She had to run away from there and had come as a refugee. Sushila (Dr. Sushila Nayyar) suggested to her to work at Kurukshetra as there was nothing else to be done, and took her with her. Today she has come here to report the situation there. Today our Munshiji is present here. His daughter too has become a doctor. Instead of just sitting idle she said she would do something. So she also went there. That lady doctor told me today that people did receive medical attention there but there were not enough doctors. So many people have been crowded into that place and there is so much hardship and suffering that two or three lady doctors are not enough. A large number of doctors were needed there. If doctors go there they will be of some help.



They are not quacks like me. They should have allopathic medicines since they are allopathic doctors. They do not have enough medicines with them, but medicines should be supplied to them. There are women and there are children. Those women were not always beggars. There are also women with one child in the womb and another in the lap. Such is our condition at present.

Whom should we blame for this? Somebody may say that the Government is inefficient. But did the Government know that there would be so much trouble? We had never had any experience of ruling the country. It is just two months since the Government came into power. How could we have coped with such a calamity? We have got to put up with it. But, while putting up with it if we lose our heads and do not control our anger and insist on giving two blows for one, this thing will never end. We shall then have no right to sing this bhajan. If we sing the bhajan, we should do so with genuine feeling. If we possess a melodious voice it should not be confined only to singing sweet songs. It should be used for worshipping God. It will be well if that melody kindles a divine feeling in some heart.

On the one hand we are facing such a situation and on the other is the problem of Kashmir. From the number of planes going from here, I guess they are all carrying soldiers. (1 Besides the Indian Air Force transport, a large number of civilian aircrafts were commandeered by the Government to fly soldiers and ammunition to Kashmir.) Some cowards are running away from there. Why should they do so? And where will they go? Why should they not put up a brave fight and lay down their lives? At this rate even if the whole of Kashmir is razed to the ground I am not going to be affected. I would gladly ask you also to rejoice over it, but on the condition that everybody, young and old, should die there valiantly. If anyone asks why the children also should die there, I will say that the children cannot go anywhere. In any case they stay with their parents. Those people are all there in Kashmir, how can we provide them with arms? A person like me does not need arms. After all, if we are alive, we have to sacrifice our lives. Then alone can we say that the soul is immortal. If we do not do this, it means that we confuse our soul with our body and worship the body. But the body has to die one day. If the child is on the mother's lap, when the mother dies he also dies. And when one has got to die, let him die willingly. Let them say that if the Afridis have come to destroy them they will prefer to perish of their own accord. Even the soldiers who have gone there would die with pleasure. They have gone there to die. When can they remain alive? Only when they know that everything is safe and there is no invasion on Kashmir



and peace is well-established. Now Kashmir is in the hands of Sheikh Abdullah. He regards the Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs as his brothers. He is a friend of all foreigners, including the Englishmen, who go and live in Kashmir. He invites everyone to enjoy the beauty of Kashmir and taste its fruits. Kashmiri crafts are wonderful. People weave beautiful cloth with their own hands and charge any price they want. Why should they not do so since Kashmir ultimately lives by its crafts? So, the Sheikh is now the ruler of Kashmir. The Maharaja is there of course. But the Sheikh is the ruler in the name of the Maharaja. The Maharaja himself has told him that he may do whatever he wants. If Kashmir is to remain it will remain and if it has to pass out of their hands it will pass out.

Look at what is happening at Kurukshetra on the one hand, and Kashmir on the other, and also think of all the hardships that have to be faced here. So many Muslims have fled to Pakistan. Those who are running away without any reason may well do so. Who can stop them? But some of them also go away because they are afraid of us. I feel ashamed when some Muslim friends come and tell me that they can no longer stick to their places, for they do not know when they might be killed. It pains me that fear has taken such roots in their hearts. Then a woman came and told me that she was feeling scared because a Pathan was after her. My heart cries out when I hear such things. Still I ask, why should there be any fear of a Pathan or anyone else when one has the support of God? But one can be fearless only when one knows that one has God with him. When a chaste woman faces a rogue who may be a Pathan or a Hindu or a Sikh—for it is not that only the Pathans are rogues; there are rogues to be found everywhere and they too can be as lustful—she would tremble at the sight of him. But why should she be scared? You do believe that Sita was never scared. She was not frightened even when Ravana carried her away on his shoulder. She went on repeating that her husband was Rama and he was right beside her. And as Rama was God incarnate, she warned Ravana that he would be reduced to ashes if he dared to touch her. She was just a tiny woman but she was pure and because of her purity she was not afraid. Purity is the most powerful weapon. If we wish to free ourselves from such a misfortune, we must all follow what is said in the bhajan. If all the women and men who come to attend the prayer follow this, this transformation will spread throughout the country like the fragrance of the rose. Today we have all lost our senses. But with the coming of purity the present calamity will be swept away like dirt. I would only pray to God that we may all be good, that Kashmir may be free from the present trouble and all may be well with the people who have come here as refugees.



As that lady doctor has reported, some goondas have entered the Kurukshetra Camp. Even after getting a blanket, the same person comes again for a second blanket. Such persons do not realize that all the people there do not have enough to wear and cover themselves. There are countless women at Kurukshetra who are still wearing the same clothes with which they had arrived. I cannot even bear to hear about these things—who knows what will happen if I have to see these things? Surely that lady doctor cannot be exaggerating when she claims to have seen with her own eyes that that is the way things are going on there.

All I wish to say is that we should realize where our adharma¹ is taking us. We should think whether or not we are settling down at any point and then ask ourselves if we are residing in a land where there is no suffering and no sorrow.

[From Hindi]

Prarthana Pravachan—II, pp. 26-32



37. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

NEW DELHI,

November 2, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

The interpretations of some critics of the Koran are not correct. (Some people had again protested against the recitation from the Koran.) By reading the Koran I do not fall from Hinduism, rather, I rise high. It is my claim that I am in no way less of a Hindu than the greatest of Hindus, in India or outside, since I believe in the Vedas, read the Gita and follow its principles in action. I have been taught from my childhood that there is no place in the world where there is no God.

Brajkishan tells me that the number of persons who have raised objection is somewhat large today. These people say that they are very much against the recitation from the Koran, but they put up with it because they wish to hear me. But where is the need for putting up with it? It would bring no good to them or to me. If they wish to join me in the prayer, then it is well to put up with it. Let them not put up with it because I am Mahatma or because I have rendered service to the country and they wish to see me. That is why I am asking if you are truly keen on having the prayer. (Gandhiji continued his speech after the prayer with everybody's consent.) are truly keen on having the prayer. (Gandhiji continued his speech after the prayer with everybody's consent.)

You must have read in the newspapers, but I also have some information about what is happening in Kashmir. It should be said that things are quite all right there now. By that I mean that Srinagar is still intact. (The tribesmen advancing on Srinagar, were repulsed by the Indian troops.) The freebooters have not yet been able to take possession of the city. Later on it should become all the more difficult to do so. The plunderers are no fighters. The whole world is going to look down upon them because they have not gone there by right. With the passage of time terrorism is diminishing. Things are in favour of the army which has gone there and it is gaining time. We cannot send a very large army by air, for it involves a lot of trouble. But I gather that the Government is being helped in every way. [Private airlines] are all willingly helping and that is why troops are easily sent by planes. The planes do not belong to the Government. The private companies owning the planes have handed them over to the Government with the idea of helping in a worthwhile cause.



One thing more—we all praise Subhas Babu’s intelligence and courage for mobilizing the Azad Hind Fauj. And he does deserve our praise, for while he was out of the country he felt it would be worthwhile to organize an army. He was not a soldier. He was an ordinary Indian like any lawyer or barrister. He had no military training. He might have learnt horse-riding as is usual with men in the Civil Service. But he must have studied military science later on. Now, I gather that two officers (According to the Daily Express correspondent in Kashmir, one of them was Major Khurshid Anwar.) of the army he had raised, and whom I had met while they were in prison and outside also, have joined the aggressors in Kashmir. This hurts me very much. They used to carry out special assignments under Subhas Babu and used to be always with him. Subhas Babu could not have kept anything secret from the army personnel because he had to work through them. It hurts me that those very persons are now going about as leaders of the freebooters. Through the newspapers, if they are getting any, or if they care to listen to me, I would ask them in my failing voice why they should involve themselves in this affair and bring down Subhas Babu’s name. Why should they side either with the Hindus or the Muslims? They should not take a communal stand. That was not against the Harijans or anyone else. There was no communal distinction among the Indians in that army. Of course all of them adhered to their respective religions, none of them had abandoned it. Subhas Babu had taken possession of their hearts, not of their bodies. It was not as if those who refused to join the Azad Hind Fauj were to be slain. He was not going to bring freedom to India by killing people like this. That is how he became great and earned fame. Why should these people now stoop so low and get involved in such mean things? If they really want to do something, let them do something for the whole of India. Let them restrain the Muslims and the Afridis from committing atrocities, plundering the people and burning the villages. Let them persuade them to write to the Maharaja and Sheikh Abdullah that they want to meet them. They must tell them that they have not gone there to plunder. If they do so I can understand their point that they have gone there to show that Islam is being crushed. Then they would be lending glory to Subhas Babu’s name and would become true teachers of the Afridis. I do not know how the Afridis live and if there are any plunderers among them. But in my view even they are human beings. The same God resides in their hearts and hence they are my brethren. If I were to live among them I would ask them why they indulge in loot and plunder and show anger towards others. I would not ask them to give up their arms. I would ask them to keep their arms, but in order to protect the people who are scared, to protect the indigent, the women and



children. What does it matter if they are Hindus or Muslims? I would tell those two officers, whose names I have already come to know, that they should remember Subhas Babu. He is dead but not his name and not his work.

Now my mind turns to Qaid-e-Azam Jinnah. I know him well. I used to go to his house. Once I had visited him 18 times. I consider it a penance. Even on a later occasion we two had put our signatures on a document (In April, 1947, vide “A Joint Appeal”, 12-4-1947.) and had become responsible for it. I used to have cordial talks with him even then. That is the reason why I would ask him, Liaquat Ali and his Cabinet what had prompted them to accuse a man like Jawaharlal of fraud. (Refusing to accept Kashmir’s accession to the Indian Union, the Government of Pakistan issued a Press communique on October 30 saying, “In the opinion of the Government of Pakistan the accession of Kashmir to the Indian Union is based on fraud and violence and as such cannot be recognized.”) Where was the need for him and his Government to act fraudulently in this? I would tell them that Jawaharlal is not a man who will deceive anyone. He is true to his name. I also know the Sardar and other men in his Cabinet. They too are no cheats. If they want to negotiate with [the Maharaja of] Kashmir it does not mean that they are trying to misguide him. Jawaharlal had been having talks with him even earlier and fighting single-handed with him for the sake of Sheikh Abdullah. (The Government of India had earlier taken up the matter of Sheikh Abdullah’s incarceration with the Kashmir State authorities. Sheikh Abdullah who was sentenced to three years’ imprisonment for demanding a responsible government in the State, was released in September, 1947.) Why then should he deceive? Can India or any country be saved by deceiving? Why then do they say such a thing? The Afridis who have infiltrated into Kashmir must be receiving some encouragement from Pakistan for indulging in their activities. How could they do it otherwise? If I had been in Pakistan I would have stopped them from indulging in such things. If Pakistan was disinterested, they could not resort to such things. But here Pakistan is not indifferent but very much involved.

Two Hindu gentlemen have come to me—one from Karachi and the other from Lahore. The man from Karachi tells me that the situation had been bad in Karachi but now things are improving day by day. So now, they asked, would I appeal to the people there not to panic? The Sindhi Muslims there have lived with the Hindus in amity. They have quarreled on many occasions, but have become friends again. I have been a witness to that. It is not that things have become perfectly normal there. But the Cabinet wants it to be so. The other gentleman tells me that all the big mansions in Lahore have been destroyed. There are not many Hindus left in Lahore—only a handful of them are there. But the Cabinet desires that the Hindus and Sikhs, all should live



there. Of course, there is some objection about the Sikhs staying there. Nevertheless, quite a few Sikhs are there. A wonderful thing I learnt about Lahore is that a Muslim gentleman has kept a Sikh in his own house. The gentleman who came to me narrated what he had seen with his own eyes. He said that that Muslim had kept an open copy of the Guru Granthsaheb in one of the rooms of his house with due respect. He has saved that Sikh because he happens to be his friend. This makes me very happy. Subsequently a Sikh gentleman came and told me that such things have happened in many places where Muslim friends gave shelter in their houses to many places where Muslim friends gave shelter in their houses to Sikhs. I have received such information from both the places. Then why should the Muslims in such large numbers be driven away to Pakistan? And why should Hindus and Sikhs run away from Pakistan and seek refuge here? Where will it all lead to? Would it not be that we will all be ruined? People cannot live in comfort when they leave their homes. One can live in comfort only in one's own home. When one leaves the home he can have neither proper food nor proper clothes. Right now people in the refugee camps are shivering in cold. They ask why they have been treated thus. They want to know why their Government did this to them. What was their fault that they have to face such hardships? They feel that there they were surrounded by the Muslims and here they are surrounded by the Hindus. How long will this continue and what would be the result? God alone knows the result. But all the same, these things pain me very much.

Why does the Qaid-e-Azam of Pakistan say that the Hindus and the Sikhs are the enemies of Muslims? There are evil-minded men among the Hindus and Sikhs and also among the Muslims. But it is wrong to condemn the entire community. With all humility I would request the entire Cabinet and people that they should all become good if they wish that India should not be destroyed and passed on into the hands of others.

I cannot thank those persons who protested in such a courteous manner against the recitation from the Koran today. This would enable them to work non-violently. They acted rightly when they expressed their disapproval of the verses from the Koran. I am glad that they allowed the prayer to be conducted without any obstruction. In this way, we are creating divine power for India. It is a gradual process. It cannot happen as if by magic. But ultimately such a power would be created. It is my prayer to God that He may grant good sense to the two senior officers of the Azad Hind Fauj



and that the ship of India, which at the moment is unsteady, may start sailing smoothly in calm waters.

[From Hindi] Prarthana Pravachan—II, pp. 32-7



38. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

(It being Gandhiji's silence day, his written speech was read out after the prayers.)

NEW DELHI,

November 3, 1947

If two quantities of poison mix together, who will decide which was first on the field and if such a decision could be arrived at what end would it serve? We know this, however, that the virus has spread throughout the Western Pakistan area and that it has not as yet been recognized as such by the powers that be. So far as the Union is concerned, it has been confined to a small part of it. Would to God that the virus would remain under isolation and control! There would then be cause for every hope that it would be expelled in due time and that soon from both the parts.

In view of the fact that Dr. Rajendra Prasad has called a meeting of the Premiers or their representatives and others to help and advise him in the matter of food control, I feel that I should devote this evening to that very important question. Nothing that I have heard during these days has moved me from the stand I have taken from the beginning that the control should be entirely removed at the earliest moment possible, certainly not later than six months hence. Not a day passes but letters and wires come to me, some from important persons, declaring emphatically that both the controls should be removed. I propose to omit the other, i. e., cloth control for the time being.

Control gives rise to fraud, suppression of truth, intensification of the black market and to artificial scarcity. Above all it unmans the people and deprives them of initiative, it undoes the teaching of self-help they have been learning for a generation. It makes them spoon-fed. This is a tragedy next only, if indeed not equal, to the fratricide on a vast scale and the insane exchange of population resulting in unnecessary deaths, starvation and want of proper residence and clothing the more poignant for the coming inclement weather. The second is certainly more spectacular. We dare not forget the first because it is not spectacular.

This food control is one of the vicious legacies of the last World War. Control then was probably inevitable because a very large quantity of cereals and other food-stuff were exported outside. This unnatural export was bound to create a man-made scarcity and lead to rationing in spite of its many drawbacks. Now there need be no



export which we can avoid if we wish to. We would help the starving parts of the world, if we do not expect outside help for India in the way of food. I have seen during my lifetime covering two generations several God sent famines, but have no recollection of an occasion when rationing was even thought of.

Today, thank God, the monsoons have not failed us. There is, therefore, no real scarcity of food. There are enough cereals, pulses and oil-seeds in the villages of India. The artificial control of prices, the growers do not, cannot, understand. They, therefore, refuse willingly to part with their stock at a price much lower than they command in the open market. This naked fact needs no demonstration. It does not require statistics or desk-work civilians buried in their red-tape files to produce elaborate reports and essays to prove that there is scarcity. It is to be hoped that no one will frighten us by trotting out before us the bogey of over-population.

Our ministers are of the people, from the people. Let them not arrogate to themselves greater knowledge than those experienced men who do not happen to occupy ministerial chairs—but who hold the view strongly that the sooner the control is removed the better. A physician writes to say that the food control has made it impossible for those who depend upon rationed food to procure eatable cereals and pulses and therefore, he says, the people needlessly suffer from ailments caused by rotten stuff.

In the place of controlled food, the Government can easily run the very stores for selling good grain which they will buy in the open market. They will thus bring about automatic regulation of prices and set free the hoarded cereals, pulses and oil-seeds. Will they not trust the grain dealers and growers? Democracy will break under the strain of apron strings. It can exist only on trust. If the people die because they will not labour or because they will defraud one another, it will be a welcome deliverance. The rest will then learn not to repeat the sin of being lazy, idle or cruelly selfish.

Harijan, 16-11-1947



39. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

NEW DELHI,

November 4, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

Today only our old courteous friend has objected to the recitation from the Koran. Hence, I would discuss a pathetic letter from a Punjabi Hindu refugee. He has suffered a great deal in Punjab. And he has objected to the recitation from the Koran. I do not know if that gentleman is present here. He may or may not be here, but I cannot ignore his letter. It is a letter written with deep pain. He has put forth fairly good arguments in the letter. But then it is full of ignorance born out of his anger. Every line he has written expresses his anger. These days practically all my time is spent listening to the tales of woe from the Hindu or Sikh refugees or the Muslims of Delhi who are in distress. I also feel the same distress in my heart and am equally hurt. But I would not be truly non-violent if I started shedding tears or became gloomy. If non-violence made me so very soft, I would be crying the whole time, and there would be no time left to worship God, and to eat and sleep. But right from childhood, being a follower of non-violence, I have made it a habit of hardening my heart instead of shedding tears while hearing or seeing any tragedy, so that I would be able to face them. Have not our saints and sages taught us that one who is a worshipper of ahimsa should be softer than a flower and harder than a stone? I have tried to live according to this teaching. That is why when I receive complaints like those in this letter or hear the angry and sorrowful tales from the visitors coming to me, I steal my heart. That is the only way I can face the present situation. The letter has been written in the Urdu script and hence I asked Brajkishan to write for me the important points of the letter.

The first charge levelled against me is that I have broken a promise. The letter says: "Have you not said that even if there is a single individual in your prayer meeting objecting to the recitation from the Koran, you would respect his wish and cancel the prayer for the evening?" This is a half-truth which is more dangerous than a total lie. When I had first cancelled the prayer (On April 2, 1947, vide "Speech at Prayer Meeting", 2-4-1947.) because there was an objection, I had declared that I was cancelling the prayer for fear that the large numbers attending the prayer may start showing their anger against the objector and may even manhandle him. This was several months ago. Since then people have learnt the art of restraint. And, when people assured me that they would



not have anger in their hearts nor any ill feeling for the objector I agreed to hold the public prayer. And, as far as I know, the result has been good. The behaviour of the persons who object is extremely courteous and apart from voicing their objection they create no obstruction in the prayer. Thus, I hope the writer of this letter will appreciate that I have not gone back on my word. And the result of continuing the prayer despite the protest has so far been good. I would like to assure you that as far as I know myself, in this long life of public service I have never been guilty of breaking a promise.

The second charge the writer of this letter has made against me is that while I have the recitation from the Koran and claim that all religions are equal, I do not have recitations from the *japji* (The opening part of the *Guru Granthsaheb*) and the Bible. This remark only betrays the ignorance of the writer. He is not aware of my statement in which I explained how the entire *Bhajanavali* was prepared. (Vide “The Reason for Addition”, 5-8-1947, “Speech at Prayer Meeting”, 19-10-1947 and “The Ashram Prayer”, 2-2-1942.) The *Ashram Bhajanavali* contains quite a few psalms from the Bible and bhajans from the *Granthsaheb*.

His third complaint is that many eminent Congress leaders have come away from West Punjab and other parts of West Pakistan; but having come to the Indian Union they do not share the trials and tribulations of other refugees. These leaders have acquired more spacious buildings than what they had occupied in Pakistan and are living in great comfort and luxury. These Congress leaders have completely isolated themselves from the refugees who have no houses to live in nor woollen clothes to protect themselves against winter. Many of the refugees do not even have a change of clothes, not to speak of the woollen clothes. They do not even get good food. If there is truth in this complaint, it is really shameful. In my prayer speeches I have denounced those well-to-do refugees who, instead of sharing the hardships of the poor refugees desert them and live in luxury. This is not religion but irreligion. The rich must share the joys and sorrows of their poor brethren.

Then that friend has taunted me that even though I intended going to Pakistan I have not yet gone. He wants to know why I am in Delhi. He asks me why I prefer to help my Muslim friends instead of going to Pakistan and help the Hindus and the Sikhs who are in distress. But the person who makes such a complaint does not realize that I cannot disregard my duty here in Delhi and go to Pakistan in the hope of helping the Hindus and the Sikhs there. I admit that I am a friend of the Muslims and others because I am equally a friend of the Hindus and the Sikhs. When I serve anyone, it is because I am inspired by the thought that he is a part not only of India or one particular



religion but of the whole of humanity. The Hindu and Sikh refugees and others here have to prove by being friendly with the Muslims here that I need not stay on in Delhi any longer. Then I would rush to Pakistan with full confidence that my going there would not be in vain.

The person who has made these complaints has not spared even the Kasturba Fund. He asks how the Kasturba Fund is being utilized and why it could not be utilized for giving relief to the refugees. The first thing is that the Fund was raised for a particular purpose when I was in jail. (After Gandhiji's release from Jail, a purse of Rs. 80 lakhs was presented to him on October 2, 1944 on behalf of the Trustees of the Kasturba Gandhi National Memorial Fund. Vide "Speech at Kasturba Memorial Trust Meeting", 2-10-1944) In other words, the Fund was raised for the purpose of serving women and children in the villages of India. There is a Board of Trustees to look after its management. The ever-vigilant Thakkar Bapa (1 A. V. Thakkar (1869-1951); joined Servants of India Society in 1914; established Bhil Seva Sadan in 1922; Secretary, Harijan Sevak Sangh; President, Gujarat Antyaja Seva Mandal; Secretary, Kasturba Gandhi National Memorial Trust, 1944-51) is its Secretary. He keeps an account of every single pie. The accounts are open for the public to see. Hence, the Fund cannot be spent for the refugees as this friend suggests. And there is no need to do so. Money is being generously given for the relief of the refugees. Everybody knows about the generous response to my appeal (Vide "Speech at Prayer Meeting", 4-10-1947.) for blankets. Sardar Patel has issued a special appeal. It has received, and it still receiving, whole-hearted public support.

The last complaint of the writer is that when Pakistan has put a ban on the slaughter of pigs why cannot India prohibit cow-slaughter? I am not aware about a legal ban on the slaughter of pigs in Pakistan. If the information given by this friend is correct, I am sorry about it. I know that Islam forbids the eating of pork. But even so, I do not think it is proper to stop the non-Muslims from eating pork.

Has not the Qaid-e-Azam proclaimed that Pakistan is not a theocratic State and religion would not be imposed by law? But, unfortunately, it is true that this claim is not always put into practice. Would India become a theocratic State and would the principles of Hinduism be imposed on non-Hindus? I hope not. If that happens India would cease to be land of hope and promise. Then it would not be a country to which not only all the races of Asia and Africa but the whole world would look with hope. The world does not expect from Hindustan whether as Indian Union or Pakistan meanness and fanaticism. It expects greatness, goodness and generosity from Hindustan so that



the whole world can learn a lesson and find light in the midst of the prevailing darkness.

I do not lag behind anyone in my devotion to and worship of the cow. But such feeling of worship and belief cannot be imposed on anybody by law. It can be created by increasing friendly relations and proper behaviour with the Muslims and all other non-Hindus. The Gujaratis and the Marwaris are supposed to be leading all others in the matter of protecting the cow. But they have forgotten the principles of Hinduism to such an extent that they would gladly impose restrictions on others while they may themselves illtreat the cow and her progeny. Why are the cattle of India the most neglected lot in the whole world? As it is generally believed, why have these cattle become a burden on the land because of their extremely low yield of milk? As beasts of burden why are the bullocks treated so badly?

The pinjarapoles of India are not such that one can be proud of. A lot of money is spent on them but the cattle are hardly tended scientifically or intelligently. These pinjarapoles cannot give a new lease of life to India's cattle. This can be done only by treating the cattle with sympathy and kindness. I claim that more than any other Hindu, I have saved a larger number of cows from the butcher's knife without the assistance of law, because of my being able to cultivate friendship with the Muslims.

[From Hindi] Prarthana Pravachan—II, pp. 40-5



40. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

NEW DELHI,

November 5, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

I do not intend to say anything today about the objection to the recitation from the Koran. I consider this a blessed moment for myself. There is one person who has objection, but he has now become our friend. He does object but very courteously. Once he has expressed it, he remains quiet. I do not even take his protest as a protest. Even if everybody starts protesting in such a manner, we are not going to lose anything. He himself has told me that once he has voiced his protest, he is absorbed in the prayer. So, it is a good thing in itself.

You have heard today a bhajan sung by a Harijan boy. You have already heard his sweet voice. He led the Ramadhun also very well. This is not an isolated experience for me. I live among the Harijans and in the course of my frequent travels round the country I have come in contact with the Harijans all over the country. If we do not already know somebody to be a Harijan and if no one introduces him as such, we can never make him out to be a Harijan. They have the same characteristics as other human beings. They have some bad qualities too, but these qualities are not peculiar to them. Other people have such bad qualities too. After all, everyone has good as well as bad qualities. But I have noticed a special trait among the Harijans, and it is that, when a Harijan child is given even a little training in music, he makes great progress. Because we have oppressed them so far, if anyone talks to them with affection and teaches them something with love, they concentrate and work hard and make good progress. The well-to-do boys are conceited and knowing that their parents have a lot of money, do not concentrate on their work. But because the Harijans are generally poor and are treated as untouchables, when someone gives them a seat next to him and eats and drinks with them, they are overwhelmed. Not all Harijans take this attitude. I have also seen ungrateful Harijans who would not show any appreciation however much you did for them. But all Harijans are not the same. For hundreds of years they have been oppressed under the Hindu dharma. Still they have remained steadfast in their own religion and compared to others, are found to be having greater qualities.



You may not have heard about a place called Pandharpur. It is a place for pilgrimage in Maharashtra. There are innumerable legends about the idols in that place, but I do not want to narrate them to you. The temple at Pandharpur was not open to Harijans. Sane Guruji (P. S. Sane; vide “Telegram to P. S. Sane”, 1-5-1947, “Letter to P. S. Sane”, 3-5-1947 and “Telegram to G. V. Mavalankar”, 7-5-1947.) installed himself there and argued with the Trustees that when all other temples were thrown open to Harijans, there was no reason why the Pandharpur temple should not be opened to them. When his request was not granted he went on fast (On May 1, 1947) Sane Guruji is a great devotee, and how could the trustees therefore allow him to die? Sense dawned on them and they were moved to pity. But they told him they were helpless in the face of a number of technical difficulties, which had to be first removed. Then Mavalankar³ joined him there and Sane Guruji was persuaded to give up his fast⁴. But he ended his fast on the condition that he would resume the fast if the temple was not opened to Harijans. Now I have received a telegram that the necessary Bill has been passed and that the temple has been opened to Harijans. The temple was willingly opened and people thronged there in thousands. There were no protests. There may have been some stray protests among those thousands. So, after all, that great temple of Pandharpur had to be opened to Harijans after so much effort. If all those excesses we have been perpetrating on the Harijans become a thing of the past the country would rise very high. But right now we are following a downward path because we are possessed by feelings of animosity. But it is my hope that India will not be forever possessed by such madness. The rest God alone knows.

I have been asked a few questions. Actually, these questions have been asked in separate letters but I have grouped them together. The first question is asked by a Muslim friend. As I said yesterday, nobody can be compelled to give up eating beef. We can only request him and convince him. The person concerned may be convinced and he may give it up. It would indeed be wonderful if he would give it up out of love. But there are a large number of Hindus who eat meat, it may be fish or some other meat. There are very few Hindus who do not take meat for religious reasons. Are you then going to compel them to give up eating meat and if they do not comply tell them that they should leave India, otherwise you would kill them? If this cannot be done, what wrong have the Muslims done? Why should they be compelled? I know there are some fanatical Hindus who are compelling them. I would call this an atrocity from which we should keep away.



The next question is raised by a Hindu friend He writes to say that it is indeed true that all Hindus do not have in them the feeling of animosity. But he refers to my advice to the Muslims that they should not leave their houses, and, if needs be, die. He says that in spite of this wise talk of mine, wisdom does not dawn on the people. On the one hand, he says, I go on with my wise talk, and on the other hand the Muslims are harassed to such an extent that they cannot even come out of their houses. They are being threatened with death if they refuse to go away. If the Muslims come out of their own localities they are being killed. But how can they earn their living if they do not come out? Many of them are craftsmen and labourers. Take for instance a weaver. If the Hindus decide not to use the cloth woven by him and threaten to kill any Hindu insisting on using his cloth, then there is no point in allowing him to stay here. How can a labourer confine himself to his own locality? He would then be worse than a slave. In a poor locality how can he maintain his family if he cannot come out? No well-to-do Muslim stays in such poor localities and how can the poor people staying there maintain themselves if they cannot go out? It is absurd if on the one hand we harass them to such an extent and on the other people like me ask them to die.

We boast that everything is under control in Delhi and no big incidents take place. But I would say that even if there is a little trouble, it should hurt us. I would go on repeating that if such things continue to happen in India, with what face can we tell the Muslims that they should stay in India? If all the Muslims go away to Pakistan and all the Hindus and Sikhs come to India, then we would become permanent enemies. And then we would be fighting to our hearts' content. Let us save ourselves from such an absurd situation.

The third question is rather complicated. It is complicated and at the same time, it is not complicated. A Muslim friend writes that he and all Muslims will be happy if I answer the question. (Here Brijkrishna Chandiwalla pointed out that the question was put by a Hindu.). But, no matter who has asked, it is a question all right. It is worth asking and also not worth asking. The question is: "You advised even the British to follow the path of non-violence when they were facing defeat. You advised them to give up arms and become non-violent. You could show that much courage there; then why don't you ask the Government of the country to fight a non-violent battle?" I have already stated that I am nobody and no one listens to me. People say that the Sardar is my man and Panditji also is but mine and Maulana too is my man. They are all mine and also not mine. I have never abandoned my nonviolence. I have been training myself in non-



violence and it was acceptable till we attained independence. Now they wonder how they can rule with non-violence. And then there is the army and they have taken the help of the army. Now I am of no value at all. But why am I still with the people when I have lost my value? It is in the hope that they may perhaps listen to me. At least a few persons like you do come and quietly join me in the prayer. Others may follow your example and ultimately wisdom may dawn on everybody. Maybe my words will have some effect. It is only with that hope that I am continuing to be here and doing all these things. I do not know how long God wants me to work. He can stop me working this very day if He so wishes. I would die right here if He takes away my breath. Hence, I still stand by what I had conveyed to Hitler, (Vide “Letter to Adolf Hitler”, 23-7-1939 and “Letter to Adolf Hitler”, 24-12-1940.) Mussolini, (ibid) Churchill (Presumably the reference is to Gandhiji’s appeal vide “To Every Briton”, 2-7-1940.) and the people of Japan. (Vide “To Every Japanese”, 18-7-1942.) I say the same thing to our Government. But in Kashmir Sheikh Abdullah is giving a brave fight—I have always admired bravery. It is true that he believes in violence but it requires courage and I do admire it. I admire even Subhas Babu not because I approved of his violence but because I could have never formed the Azad Hind Fauj. When I see something good and fail to give it due credit, I cannot be truly non-violent. I have no doubt that if Sheikh Abdullah fights it to the last and keeps the Hindus and the Sikhs with him, it is bound to have a great impact on the people here. However, if I could have my way of non-violence and everybody listened to me, we would not send our army as we are doing now. And if we did send, it would be a non-violent army. It doing now. And if we did send, it would be a non-violent army. It would be a non-violent fight if our people went there and gladly met their death at the hands of the Afridis. It would be a non-violent war because they would be dying remaining non-violent. Sheikh Abdullah too would tell the Afridis that they could take Srinagar but only when all the fighters were dead. But they are all fighting with arms and fighting bravely. They too can become non-violent—though it would not be the true form of non-violence. Supposing an army of a lakh of armed Afridis invaded the place and a handful of people offered armed resistance in order to protect the innocent children and women and died fighting, then they could be called no-violent in spite of their using arms. But to whom can I say this? Today poison has spread on all sides and people kill each other in a barbarous manner. In this situation even I am not able to teach this simple lesson in nonviolence. In his time Mr. Churchill could not say, but today, Sheikh Abdullah and the army which has gone there can tell me that my nonviolence has failed in Delhi where acts of barbarism are being committed and what



they are doing is not barbaric. And I must admit that they have a right to say that. But they cannot tell me anything if I can convince all the Hindus, Muslims and the Sikhs of the Union about my non-violence. In that event, I could myself go with a nonviolent army to Kashmir or Pakistan or any place, and then my work would become very easy. And then, the impact of non-violence would be so great that it would be worth seeing. But when can I hope for such an occasion? If you listen to my words and act in accordance with them, if my words have greater power and my heart greater strength, if my penance, however great it may be becomes still greater and every word of mine becomes so powerful that it grips the whole of India, my task will be accomplished. But today I am helpless. If you also pray to God that He may put strength into my words and take me further than where He has taken me and get still more work out of my body, then India may have greater impact on the world.

The delegates from Britain, China, the U. S. A. and Pakistan who came to attend the Asian Regional Conference (Of the International Labour Organization which was held in Delhi. Vide also "Interview to Chinese Delegation", 5-11-1947.) praised me for my work. But their praise hurts me. Today I have become bankrupt. I have no say with my people today. What I said in the past has no value. I will be worthy of praise only when I can influence people. But that is not the situation today. I am merely expressing my helplessness before you.

[From Hindi] Prarthana Pravachan—II, pp. 45-52



41. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

November 6, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

I know the name of the writer but I do not intend to reveal his name or the contents of what is written in those two extracts (The reference is to two newspaper cuttings sent by a friend.). I merely want to say that those articles have been written with the intention of serving Hinduism but they contain deliberate lies. When new points cannot be put forth, facts are presented in a distorted form. But I dare say that no purpose, certainly no religious purpose, can be served by resorting to such means. When accusations are based not on facts but on lies, they can do no harm to the person who is being attacked. I warn the public that they should not support such newspapers no matter how renowned the writers may be.

The Committee (The Food grain Policy Committee) of the non-officials appointed by the Food Minister has presented its report to him. I had a meeting with the provincial Ministers or their representatives who had come to Delhi to help Dr. Rajendra Prasad in reaching a decision on the recommendations of that Committee. (Vide the preceding item.) When I learnt about the meeting, I requested Dr. Rajendra Prasad to give me a chance to put my views before them so that I could dispel their doubts. For I am quite sure that I am absolutely right in my opinion that control on food should be removed. Dr. Rajendra Prasad readily agreed and I could place my views before those Ministers and their representatives. I was very happy to meet my old friends. I have been constantly complaining that no one takes me seriously in the matter of communal strife. But I am glad to say that the same is not the case with regard to my advice on the food question. Ever since I met Mr. Casey, the Governor of Bengal, I have been of the view that in India there is no need at all to have control on food or cloth. At that time I did not know whether I had any backing or not. But during the current discussion I was quite surprised to know that I had a very large support from the known and unknown members of the public. Among the countless letters I receive about the food problem, I do not remember a single letter in which its writer has expressed an opinion other than mine. I do not know what Shri Ghanshyam Das Birla (Industrialists) and Lala Shriram (Industrialists) think about this. Nor do I know if the Socialist Party would support my view. Of course, when Dr. Rammanohar Lohia met me he fully agreed with me about removing food control. I do not hesitate to say that in the present situation of



food scarcity through which the country is passing, Dr. Rajendra Prasad should be guided by one or more members of his Committee and not by his entire staff.

Let me now come to control on cloth. Even though I am more certain about removing control on cloth than control on food, I am afraid I do not have as much support in the removal of cloth-control as in the removal of food-control. The Congress had gladly supported my view that khadi could take the place of the mill-cloth, whether Indian or foreign. It had set up a Khadi Board under the late Jamnalalji (Jamnalal Bajaj) which was expanded into the All-India Spinners' Association after my release from the Yeravda Prison. India has a population of 400 million. Even after discounting the portion of the population of Pakistan, India would still have more than 300 million. India grows enough cotton for the entire population. There are sufficient number of persons to spin that cotton into yarn. And, there are more than sufficient number of weavers to weave cloth out of that yarn. Without a large investment we can easily manufacture in the country spinning-wheels, looms and other accessories that we need. All that we need is robust faith in ourselves and a determination to wear no other cloth but khadi. You know that we can make khadi of the fine quality with designs that would be far superior to those of the mills. Now that India is free from the foreign yoke, there will no longer be opposition to khadi which was characteristic of the representatives of foreign rulers. That is why I am surprised all the more that even when we are completely free to do what we want, we neither talk about khadi nor have faith in the potentialities of khadi. And, we think of nothing but mill-cloth to meet India's needs in this respect. I have not the slightest doubt that khadi economics can be the only true and sound economics for India.

[From Hindi] Prarthana Pravachan—II, pp. 52-4



42. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

NEW DELHI,

November 7, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

It pains me to know that the Muslims of Tihar (Gandhiji had visited Tihar village at 4 p. m. and met the Muslims there.) and the neighbouring areas have to suffer unnecessary hardships. Many of them are landowners but are unable to till their land for fear of harassment. They have sold away their cattle, ploughs and other implements. They are being protected by the army. (While Gandhiji was returning to Delhi, his car was stopped by a number of Indian soldiers who saluted him and assured him that they were providing full protection to those in distress. Gandhiji smiled and said that providing protection and kindness without distinction of caste or creed was the attribute of a soldier.) More than two thousands of those distressed people had gathered round me. Through their leader they conveyed to me their desire to go to Pakistan, because life had become impossible for them here. They said that a large number of their friends and relatives had already gone to Pakistan. Hence, it would be a mercy if the Government could arrange to send them to Lahore. They said they had nothing to complain against the army. However, I would not like to devote the whole time in giving an account of that meeting. I told those people that I had no power in my hands, but I would gladly convey their message to the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister, who is also the Home Minister.

I am told that the refugees have become a problem in Delhi and that because they have suffered atrocities in Pakistan, they think they have special privileges. When they go to buy things in the market they expect the shopkeeper to give them what they want without charging them anything or at a considerably reduced rate. At times, a single person buys things worth hundreds of rupees. Some refugees expect the tongawallahs to give them free rides or charge a very nominal fare. If this report is true, it is my duty to say that the refugees have failed to learn the lesson that sufferers generally learn through hardships. Thereby they are harming themselves and the country and making the already complicated problem more complicated. If they continue to behave like this, they are sure to lose the sympathy of the Delhi traders.

At the same time, I cannot understand how the refugees who have come from Pakistan after losing everything, can buy things worth hundreds of rupees. I would also wish that except on rare and necessary occasions, the refugees should not use



anything other than their God given feet for moving about. Apart from this, I am also told that ever since lakhs of refugees started coming to Delhi, there has been a steep rise in the revenue derived from spirituous liquor. As a matter of fact, those people should realize that when the Central and the Provincial Governments accede to the demands of the Congress, neither hard liquor nor other intoxicants like opium and hemp would be available in the Indian Union. The same situation can be created in Pakistan too, because our Muslim friends would not need a Congress resolution to declare total prohibition. Can the refugees, who have undergone so many hardships, not restrain themselves from taking intoxicants and indulging in luxuries? I hope the refugee men and women will take the advice I have given them through my earlier speeches that wherever they go, the refugees should mix with the people like sugar in milk, and make a firm resolve not to be a burden on them. Let the rich and the poor refugees live in the same camps and work in full cooperation, so that they can become ideal and self-supporting citizens.

[From Hindi] Prarthana Pravachan—I, pp. 55-7



43. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

NEW DELHI,

November 8, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

Will you fulfil the primary condition that you will not harbour any feeling of anger or revenge against the persons who are raising the objection and sit in silence and concentration till the end of the prayer? (The people, including four objectors, unanimously assured Gandhiji that they would observe silence and the prayer was held without any obstruction.)

I have received a letter from a Sikh friend. He has said that he always attends the prayer meeting and likes doing so. He appreciates the spirit of tolerance in the prayer, especially my comments about the Granthsaheb, Sukhmani (A part of the Granthsaheb), Japji, etc. He writes to say that if I select some portions from the Sikh scriptures included in the Bhajanaavali and have a daily recitation of them during the prayer, it will have a great effect on the Sikhs. He feels that he can say this on behalf of the entire Sikh community. He says that he is ready to read out those selected passages to me. I agree with his suggestion. But I would take a decision only after I have heard some bhajans from that friend. He must get an appointment from Brajkishan for that purpose.

I had once stated that cotton, calico, needles, etc., should be made available to the refugees so that they can make their own quilts. (Vide "Speech at Prayer Meeting", 12-10-1947.) Thereby we can save millions of rupees and the refugees can easily have something to cover themselves. In response to my appeal the cotton merchants of Bombay have written to me that they are ready to supply these items. In this way, the refugees will rise in their own eyes and will learn the first lesson of healthy cooperation. The number of textile mills in Delhi itself is by no means small. There are quite a few mills in the city. Still, I welcome this gift from Bombay, because I do not want to place any unnecessary burden on voluntary donors. The larger the number of persons willing to give charity, the better will it be for the refugees and the country. Hence, I hope that the cotton merchants of Bombay would quickly send as many bales as they can. Such cooperation from the rich would lessen the burden of the Government. Now that we are a free nation, every individual can willingly participate



in the activities of the Government of the country, provided he fulfils his duties by realizing the full responsibilities of the citizen of an independent country.

I have no doubt that when the bales of cotton arrive I will be able to persuade the mill-owners to supply enough chintz for quilts. The talk about bales of cotton reminds me of cloth-control. In my opinion, it is possible and also easy for the people of India to manufacture enough khadi by hand. The only condition is that sufficient cotton should be available in the country. I do not know if there ever was a famine of cotton in the country. We can never have a scarcity of cotton, because we always produce more cotton than the country needs. Tens of thousands of bales of cotton are being exported from the country. Still, there is never a shortage of cotton for the textile mills of the country. I have already drawn your attention to the fact that it is possible to have within the country all the implements necessary for carding, spinning and weaving by hand. At the same time, there are also people in large numbers wanting to work. Hence, I can only say that it is nothing but inertia which makes people think that there is scarcity of cloth in the country. Today nobody in the country wants cloth-control—neither the mills, nor the mill-hands nor the buying public. Controls are increasing the band of lazy people and thus ruining the country. Such people, for want of any work, are a constant source of mischief.

If the refugees are determined to occupy themselves in useful work, they would first make their own quilts, and then all—women and men—would spend their time in ginning, carding, spinning, weaving, etc. The energy generated by the co-operative effort of so many lakhs of refugees would electrify the country. They would inspire the people to spend all their spare time in growing more food and producing khadi in their own homes. Let it be remembered that if the cotton, instead of being packed into bales, is directly made available to the spinners one process would be saved. The cotton would not be damaged, carding would become easy and the seeds would be saved for the villages.

Lady Mountbatten had come to meet me. She has become an angel of mercy. She keeps visiting both the Dominions, (As Chairman of the United Council for Relief and Welfare) meets the refugees in different camps, looks up the sick and distressed people and tries to console them as much as she can. When she paid a visit to the Kurukshetra camp, people asked her when I was expected to go there. All of them were so keen to see me that Lady Mountbatten was convinced that I should undoubtedly go there. I assured her that she was justified in anticipating my visit. To tell you the truth, I have



made arrangements to visit Panipat, where both the Hindus and the Muslims are anxious to see me. I had decided to combine the visits to Kurukshetra and Panipat. But now I have come to know that I cannot combine the two. Hence, it has become necessary to postpone my visit to Kurukshetra until after the forthcoming meeting of the A.I.C.C. (2 Scheduled to be held on November 15 and 16) Nonetheless, it has been suggested that even though it is difficult to arrange for loudspeakers in a sprawling camp like Kurukshetra, it should not be difficult to talk to them over the radio, provided the necessary speakers are installed in the camp. If such an arrangement is made, I would be able to speak to them on Tuesday or Wednesday and would go and see them later. In the meantime, I hope to complete my visit to the Panipat camp.

[From Hindi] Prarthana Pravachan—II, pp. 57-60



44. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

(Since Gandhiji was observing silence, his written speech was read out after the prayers.)

NEW DELHI,

November 9, 1947

I regret that as I have to go to Panipat tomorrow, I had to take silence early today so as to be able to speak to the Hindus and the Muslims of Panipat on reaching there. I hope to return to Delhi in time for the prayer tomorrow evening when I shall be able to speak. The newspapers wrongly report that I am going to Kurukshetra tomorrow. I said definitely that I did intend to go to the Kurukshetra camp though not before the conclusion of the forthcoming A.I.C.C. meeting. I expect to speak to them through the radio probably on Wednesday at a time to be announced in due course.

Diwali will be on us in a few days. A sister who is herself a refugee writes: (The letter is not reproduced here. The correspondent had suggested that forgetting the sorrows of the past, the coming Diwali, being the first in independent India, should be celebrated by all.)

Whilst I admire this sister and others like her, I cannot help saying that she and those who think like her are wrong. It is well known that a family which is overtaken by sorrow abstains from participation in festivities according to capacity. It is an illustration of the doctrine of oneness on a very limited scale. Break through the crust of limitation and India becomes one family. If all limitations vanish, the whole world becomes one family, which it really is. Not to cross these bars is to become callous to all fine feelings which make a man. We must not be self-centered or being falsely sentimental ignore facts. My advice to abstain from the rejoicings (Vide “Speech at Prayer Meeting”, 9-8-1947.) is broad based on many solid considerations. The refugee problem is there, affecting lakhs of Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs. There is as well want (albeit manmade) of food and clothing. The deeper cause is dishonesty of the many who can mould public opinion, obstinate refusal of sufferers to learn from their sufferings and extensive inhumanity of man to man. I can see in this misery no cause for joy. A resolute and wise refusal to take part in festivities will be an incentive to introspection and self-purification. Let us not do anything which will throw away a blessing which has been won after hard toil and tribulation.

I must now refer to a visit of friends from French India (Vide “Message for Citizens of Chandranagore”, 8-11-1947.) during the week. They complained that what I had said



regarding what was claimed to be a satyagraha in Chandranagore, (Vide “Speech at Prayer Meeting”, 17-8-1947.) was misused to suppress the aspirations of the people in French India for the fullest measure of autonomy under the Indian Union, whilst retaining at the same time, the *wholesome influence of French culture. They also told me that, as under the British Government, there were, in French India, those who might be likened to fifth-columnists, who, in order to serve their selfish purpose, co-operated with the French authorities who, in their turn, were aiming at suppressing the natural aspirations of the inhabitants of French India. I would be very sorry indeed if the account given by the visitors from French India were accurate. Anyway, my opinion is quite emphatic. It is not possible for the inhabitants of these small foreign settlements (Viz., Goa, Daman, Diu, Mahe, Pondicherry and Chandranagore) to remain under servility in the face of the millions of their countrymen who have become free from the British rule. I am surprised that my friendly act towards Chandranagore could be distorted by anyone to suggest that I could ever countenance an inferior status in the little foreign settlements in India. I hope, therefore, that the information given to me has no foundation in fact, and that the great French nation would never identify itself with the suppression of people, whether black or brown, in India or elsewhere.

Harijan, 16-11-1947



45. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

NEW DELHI,

November 10, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

If we too become servants of God alone like Mirabai, all our troubles would be over. (Gandhiji was referring to the bhajan by Mirabai, Mhane chakar rakhoji, sung during the prayer.) You would realize the significance of this after you have heard what I am going to say. You must have read about Junagadh in the newspapers. (According to a Press communique issued by the Government of India “the Regional Commissioner of Rajkot was approached . . . by Major Harvey Jones. . . with a letter from the Junagadh Dewan, appealing to the Government of India to take over the Junagadh administration. This request was made in order to save the State from complete administrative break-down. The Government of India took over the administration of the Junagadh State on November 9. The Indian troops entered Junagadh city at 6 p. m.) I am satisfied after receiving two telegrams from Rajkot that the news published in the Press is absolutely correct. The Prime Minister of Junagadh, Shah Nawaz Bhutto, and the Nawab are in Karachi. The Deputy Prime Minister, Major Harvey Jones, is in Junagadh. They are all responsible for Junagadh acceding to the Indian Union. From this you have a right to infer that Qaid-e-Azam Jinnah also has given his sanction in this matter. If that is so, you can come to the conclusion that the troubles in Kashmir and Hyderabad (The Nizam wanted “Hyderabad to be an independent sovereign state” and refused to accede to India. Prolonged discussions between the Government of India and the Nizam were conducted by their emissaries. The Nizam utilized the interregnum provided by the negotiations to build up his armed strength by importing weapons from Europe.) would also be over. And I would even say that the trend now would be towards peace. Both the Dominions would develop friendly relations and would work in mutual cooperation. I do not think about the Qaid-e-Azam as the Governor-General. As the Governor-General the Qaid-e-Azam has no legal right at all to interfere in the affairs of Pakistan. In that capacity he is in the same position as that of Lord Mountbatten in India who is only the constitutional Governor-General. Lord Mountbatten has gone for the wedding of a person who is more than a son to him and who is getting married to the future queen of England. He could go there only after taking permission from his Cabinet and would be coming back by November 24, 1947. Hence in my opinion Jinnah is the maker of the present Muslim League and nothing can be done in Pakistan without his



knowledge and sanction. That is why I feel that if Jinnah has a hand in Junagadh's accession to the Indian Union, it is a happy augury.

I wish to tell you something about my visit to Panipat. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad accompanied me during my visit. Rajkumari was also expected to accompany me, but she was at the Government House and I could not wait beyond 10.30 according to my watch. I am glad I went to Panipat. I saw the Muslim patients in the hospital there. (Gandhiji spent a few minutes with every patient, occasionally covering a patient properly with the sheet.) Some of them have been badly wounded. But they are being given the best possible attention, because Rajkumari has sent there four doctors, nurses and medical assistants. After that we met the representatives of the Muslims, local Hindus and the refugees. More than 20,000 refugees are reported to be in Panipat. We were told every day more and more refugees are pouring in. The Deputy Commissioner and the Police Superintendent see great danger in this trend. I am glad to say that these officers have earned great praise from the Hindus as well as the Muslims. And, as for the refugees, they have nothing to complain about. They are satisfied with them.

We could also meet the refugees who had gathered near the Municipal House. The refugees had to undergo terrible hardships in Pakistan and are still suffering the same hardships in the disorganized life at Panipat. Some of them are living on railway platforms, and quite a few of them are in the open, right under the sky. Nevertheless, I was very happy to notice that there was no anger in their hearts or on their faces. They were very happy that we had been there. I felt the authorities had been quite callous in collecting so many refugees in Panipat without giving advance notice to the Deputy Commissioner and the people concerned. The officials at Panipat came to know about the exact number of refugees only when the trains arrived at the station. This is most unfortunate. There are women, children and aged people among the refugees at Panipat. I was told that among the refugees there are also women who had delivered babies on the railway platform.

All this is happening in East Punjab where Dr. Gopichand (Gopichand Bhargava) is the Chief Minister. Dr. Gopichand is my co-worker. I have great respect for him. I have known him for many years as a capable organizer having great influence on the Punjabis. He has done considerable work for the Harijan Sevak Sangh, the All-India Spinners's Association and the All-India Village Industries Association. I should not think that the task in East Punjab is beyond him. But, if Panipat is the sample of his efficiency, it is a matter of great shame for his Government. Why were so many



refugees brought to Panipat without any notice? Why are the arrangements for accommodating them so inadequate? Why should not the officers be informed in advance as to who and how many refugees are being sent to Panipat? Along with this I have also received the information yesterday that there are about three lakh Muslims in Gurgaon district who have left their houses in panic. They are lying in the open on both sides of the road hoping to cover a distance of 300 miles along with their women, children and cattle in this biting cold of the Punjab. I do not believe this story. I think there are some mistakes in what my friends have told me. I still hope that this information is incorrect or is a gross exaggeration. But what I saw at Panipat has shaken my dis-belief in such reports. Nonetheless, I hope that Dr. Gopichand is Cabinet would take a warning while there is still time and would not rest till proper arrangements are made for looking after the refugees. Such arrangements can be made only by foresight and extreme caution.

[From Hindi] Prarthana Pravachan—II, pp. 63-8



46. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

November 11, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

I told you yesterday that the Provisional Government had entered the State of Junagadh at the request of its Prime Minister (1 Shah Nawaz Bhutto) and Deputy Prime Minister (Major Harvey Jones). I was surprised as well as happy to tell you this because I had not expected that the struggle which was being carried on behalf of the people of Junagadh would have such a happy ending. (A Press communique issued by the Government of India said: “the Regional Commissioner of Rajkot was approached . . . by Major Harvey Jones . . . with a letter from the Junagadh Dewan, appealing to the Government of India to take over the Junagadh administration . . . to save the State from complete administrative break-down . . . pending honourable settlement of several issues involved in the Junagadh accession. We have considered this request and with a view to avoiding chaos in the State and its repercussions have agreed to take over the administration of Junagadh with immediate effect.”) I had also expressed the fear that if the request of the officials of Junagadh did not have the sanction from the Qaid-e-Azam Jinnah (Governor-General of Pakistan), it would not be proper to feel happy about it right now. Hence, you would be amazed and distressed to know that the officials of Pakistan have protested against the Provisional Government assuming power on behalf of the people of Junagadh. They have demanded “withdrawal of Indian troops from the State territory and relinquishment of the administration to the rightful Government and stoppage of violence and invasion of the State by people from the Indian Union”. They also say that neither the Nawab nor the Dewan of Junagadh has any legal authority to negotiate permanent or provisional settlement with the Indian Union. According to Pakistan the action of the Government of India is “a clear violation of the Pakistan territory and a breach of international law”.

Looking at the Press reports that have appeared yesterday, I find that there was neither a breach of international law in this matter, nor any operation by the Union Government to establish control over the State. As far as I can see, there is nothing illegal in the campaign carried on by the Provisional Government on behalf of the people of Junagadh. It is true that the Union Government sent military help for the safety of the whole of Kathiawar at the request of the rulers of Kathiawar. For that reason, I find nothing illegal in this whole action. As against this; whatever the Dewan of Junagadh did by publicly changing his stand was illegal. I look at the whole situation like this— the Nawab of Junagadh had no right at all to accede to Pakistan without the



consent of his people, of which I am told 85% are Hindus. (The Nawab of Junagadh after consenting to accede to India, had revoked his decision, fled to Pakistan and executed an Instrument of Accession on September 15 whereby the State was declared to have acceded to Pakistan. The Government of India refused to accept the accession of Junagadh to Pakistan in the circumstances in which it was made.) The sacred hill of Girnar and all the temples on it are part of Junagadh. The Hindus have spent a lot of money on those temples and thousands of pilgrims go to the Girnar on pilgrimage from all parts of India. In free India, the whole country belongs to the people. Not even the smallest portion of it is the private property of the Princes. They can retain their claim only by becoming trustees of the people and that is why they would be required to give evidence of popular support for every action of theirs. True, the Princes have not yet realized that they are the trustees and representatives of the people. And it is also true that with the exception of the alert subjects of some States, the people of all States have not yet realized themselves as the true rulers of their States. But that does not diminish the value of the principle I have laid down.

Hence, only the people of a particular State have a legal right to accede to one of the Unions. If the Provisional Government does not represent the people of Junagadh at any stage, it is merely a group of people who are unjustly occupying seats of power in the State and it should be driven out by both the Dominions. If any ruler joins any of the Unions in his personal capacity, the Dominion cannot stand before the world to justify his action. From this point of view, I think that the Nawab's accession has been baseless from the very beginning till it is proved that the people of the State have given their consent to the accession by the Nawab. The dispute as to which Union Junagadh would finally accede to can be resolved only by taking public opinion, that is, by referendum. This task should be properly carried out and should not involve violence or show of violence. The stand taken by the Government of Pakistan and now also by the Prime Minister of Junagadh, has created a strange situation. Who was to decide whether Pakistan was in the right or the Union Government? One cannot even think that it can be decided by an appeal to the sword. The only honourable way is to decide the matter through arbitration. We can find many impartial individuals in the country itself but, if the parties concerned cannot agree to arbitration by Indians, I for one will have no objection to any impartial person from any part of the world.

Whatever I have said about Junagadh equally applies to Kashmir (On October 23, some two thousand or more Afridis and other tribesmen entered the Kashmir State and indulged in loot, arson and murder. In view of the grave emergency prevailing in the State, Maharaja Harisingh



of the Jammu and Kashmir State appealed to the Indian Union for military help and signed the Instrument of Accession on October 27.) and Hyderabad (The Nizam wanted “Hyderabad to be an independent sovereign State” and refused to accede to the Dominion of India. After prolonged discussions between the Government of India and the Nizam, a delegation led by the Nawab of Chhatari arrived at a draft standstill agreement on October 22. The Nizam, however, against the advice of his Council, dissolved the delegation and appointed a new one on October 29. Vide also “Fragment of A Letter”, 26-11-1947.). Neither the Maharaja of Kashmir nor the Nizam of Hyderabad has any authority to accede to either Union without the consent of his people. As far as I know, this point was clarified in the case of Kashmir. (The Government of India, while accepting the accession of Jammu and Kashmir to India, had “made it clear to the Maharaja that, as soon as the invaders have been driven from the soil of Kashmir, the people of the State should decide the question of accession”.) If it had been only the Maharaja who had wanted to accede to the Indian Union, I could never support such an act. The Union Government agreed to the accession for the time being because both the Maharaja and Sheikh Abdullah (Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah (1905-82), President, All-India States’ People’s Conference; President, Jammu and Kashmir National Conference. After Kashmir’s accession to the Indian Union he was sworn in Head of the Emergency Administration in Jammu and Kashmir on October 31, 1947.), who is the representative of the people of Jammu and Kashmir, wanted it. Sheikh Abdullah came forward because he claims to represent not only the Muslims but the entire masses in Kashmir.

I have heard people talking in whispers that Kashmir could be divided. Jammu would come to the Hindus and the Muslims would have Kashmir. I cannot even think of such divided loyalty and division of the Indian States into several parts. Hence, I hope that the whole of India would act sensibly and this ugly situation would be avoided soon at least for the sake of lakhs of Indians who have been compelled to become helpless refugees.

[From Hindi] Prarthana Pravachan—II, pp. 66-9



47. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

November 12, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

Today is Diwali and I congratulate all of you on the occasion. It is a great day in the Hindu calendar. According to the Vikram Samvat, New Year begins tomorrow on Thursday (According to the Gujarati calendar). You must understand why Diwali is celebrated every year with illuminations. In the great battle between Rama and Ravana, Rama symbolized the forces of good and Ravana the forces of evil. Rama conquered Ravana and this victory established Ramarajya in India.

But alas! Today there is no Ramarajya in India. So how can we celebrate Diwali? Only those who have Rama within can celebrate this victory. For, God alone can illumine our souls and only that light is real light. The *bhajan* ("Light thy heart and sweep out from there evil thoughts and anger." Vide "Ashram Bhajana-vali", hymn 251, 13-12-1930.) that was sung today emphasizes the poet's (Ranchhod) desire to see God. Crowds of people go to see artificial illumination but what we need today is the light of love in our hearts. We must kindle the light of love within. Then only would we deserve congratulations. Today thousands are in acute distress. Can you, everyone of you, lay your hand on your heart and say that every sufferer, whether Hindu, Sikh or Muslim, is your own brother or sister? This is the test for you. Rama and Ravana are symbols of the unending struggle between the forces of good and evil. True light comes from within.

With what a sad heart has Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru returned after seeing wounded Kashmir! He was unable to attend the Working Committee meeting yesterday and also this afternoon. He has brought some flowers from Baramula (4 After a brutal attack by the raiders the town was recaptured by the Indian troops.) for me. I always cherish such gifts of nature. But today loot, arson and bloodshed have spoiled the beauty of that lovely land. Jawaharlal had been to Jammu also. There too all is not well.

Sardar Patel had to go to Junagadh at the request of Shri Shamaldas Gandhi and Dhebarbhai (1 U.N. Dhebar (1905-77); organized Rajkot Mill Kamdar Mazdoor Sangh; Minister of Saurashtra, 1948, President, Indian National Congress, 1955-59; Chairman, Scheduled Tribe Areas Commission, 1960; elected to Lok Sabha, 1962; President of Bharatiya Adim Jati Sangh, 1962-64) who had sought his advice. Both Jinnah and Bhutto are angry because they feel that the Indian Government has deceived them and is pressing Junagadh to accede to the Union.



It is the duty of everyone to banish hatred and suspicion from his heart in order to establish peace and goodwill in the country. If you do not feel the presence of God within you and do not forget your petty internal quarrels, success in Kashmir or Junagadh would prove futile. Diwali cannot be celebrated till you bring back all the Muslims who have fled in fear. Pakistan also would not survive if it does not do likewise with the Hindus and Sikhs who have run away from there. (Gandhiji then referred to his visit to the Broadcasting House.)

Tomorrow I shall tell you what I can about the Congress Working Committee. May you and all India be happy in the New Year which begins on Thursday. May God illumine your hearts so that you can serve not only each other or India but the whole world.

[From Hindi] Prarthana Pravachan—II, pp. 69-71



48. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

November 13, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

Yesterday was Diwali and today is the New Year. I have heard and I heard it all the more yesterday that Delhi has great illuminations on Diwali day which perhaps beat even the illuminations in Bombay. There are magnificent illuminations in Bombay every year. I was pleased to hear that people had realized that this is not the time to celebrate Diwali. But the superstition still persists that there should be at least some lights on Diwali day. Hence, oil lamps were seen at some places. There were some electric lights, too, though very few. I do not go out but I get all the information.

The New Year begins today. I had already mentioned it yesterday, but I may as well refer to it again. On New Year day we make some pious resolutions and by the grace of God try to follow them all through the year. If we do this, and if the atmosphere prevailing today changes and the Hindus and Muslims live together in amity, we shall have a right to celebrate the next Diwali with illuminations. We can accomplish nothing by regarding one another as enemies. That is why I stressed that this is no occasion for an outward celebration of Diwali. We should try to illuminate our hearts. Rama resides in our hearts and there is a continuous battle between Rama and Ravana raging inside us. If, in our hearts and not outside, Ravana triumphs over Rama, it means that there is no light but darkness in our hearts. If, instead, it is Rama who triumphs over Ravana, then there is indeed light in our hearts and this entitles us to have illuminations outside as well. Hence, all is well if the light outside is the symbol of the light within. Instead, if there is darkness in our hearts and we have illuminations outside and try to convince ourselves that everything is fine, we are hypocrites and liars. I only hope that we are never untruthful.

I told you yesterday that I would say something about the meetings of Congress Working Committee. There was no time yesterday because I did not want to take more than fifteen minutes. Today is the third day of the Congress Working Committee meeting. It is still in session. One important thing that I am entitled to tell you is that the members of the Working Committee and others (The special invitees to the Congress Working Committee meeting were: B. G. Kher, Pattabhi Sitaramayya, S. K. Patil, Jayaprakash Narayan, Kamaraj Nadar, Dr. Saifuddin Kitchlew and Prof. N. G. Ranga.) who have been specially invited by Acharya Kripalani (J. B. Kripalani (1888-1982); Principal, Gujarat Vidyapith, 1920-27, General Secretary of the Indian



National Congress, 1934-45; its President, 1946-47, Member, Constituent Assembly; started the Krishak Mazdoor Praja Party which later merged into the Praja Socialist Party; resigned from the Praja Socialist Party in 1954) have been sitting together in the meetings for the last three days. It is a good thing that they are unanimously of the opinion that it has been the policy of the Congress since its inception, that is, for the last sixty years, that Congress is not an institution that propagates any particular religion. There are people of all religions in the Congress or, say, because it belongs to people of different religions, it does not belong to any one particular religion. It is an organization of the masses and it has to function only for political goals. It does not remain a religious body if it functions that way. Supposing one of the policies of the Congress is to provide food to all the people, to be true to its name it must provide food for everybody. If the Congress provides food only to those who are with it or, say, only to the Hindus and the Sikhs because they are in a majority and allows others to starve and says that it is not bothered about them, it would be a religious body superficially but in fact it would become an irreligious organization. If it advocates service of only those who are its followers and wants others to be killed, it would not be dharma, but *adharma* (Contrary to *dharma*) in the name of dharma.

If I am a worshipper of Rama and do not worship any god, the law cannot force me to do so. It is another matter if I act against my faith or become a coward and say that a particular man is carrying a sword and that if I do not obey him he would kill me. But, if I am not a coward, when I am forced to worship Allah instead of Rama, I should have, and I have, a right to insist that I would worship only Rama and not Allah. All that the other person can do is to cut my throat. Let him do so. Then it is a matter of faith, which we call personal or individual dharma. There is no power on earth which can destroy one's personal dharma. Of course, it can be destroyed when the individual himself wants to do it, or when, instead of light, there is only darkness in one's heart. In such circumstances, when he cannot make up his mind he takes help from someone or just follows the bidding of some other person because he is surrounded by darkness. But the person who is steadfast in his faith would listen to the command only of God and none else. Likewise, when an organization functions for the welfare of the people, only the things which are consistent with dharma apply to everybody and nothing else. And in this way it embodies dharma and not *adharma*. That, in my view, is the true meaning of politics and the Congress has followed this from the time of its inception. You should be happy that it is so, whether you belong to the Congress or not. Even I do not belong to the Congress. But so what? After all, I have been a



Congress worker and have served it. What does it matter if I do not pay four annas for membership? I must pay the membership fee of four annas if I want to be its President. But that is not the question. If all of you think like me, it is really remarkable. It is good if you have registered yourselves as Congress members. It is well, too, if you are serving the Congress from outside. I have been sitting with the Congress Working Committee for the past three days. There are many differences of opinion in the Working Committee. The members are human beings after all, they are not stones. One member says one thing and another member says something else. There may be differences of opinion, but there should be no contradiction in behaviour. That is why they spent three days discussing these differences. But they are all united about one thing, that is, that the Congress should continue to be what it has been so far. If in the process it has to perish, let it perish. Of course it cannot be completely wiped out, though it can remain in minority. And I doubt if it is in the majority at present. For there should have been no Pakistan if the Congress were in majority. I can quote many instances to show how much the Muslims have been oppressed in India. But what should I say? You know more than I do. Have the Hindus and the Sikhs in Pakistan been oppressed less? But let us not talk about it. It is not for us to think of those things. Should I stop following my religion because others in the world do not adhere to theirs? That is why the Congress, whether it is in majority or minority, must adhere to its original objective. It is framing its resolutions from that point of view. It wants to present its views in a straightforward, sincere manner. What can be more straightforward than that we do not wish to compel a single Muslim to go away from here? The point is not whether the Muslims are good or bad. Can we claim that only angels have a right to live in India, and, if not angels, only good people can remain here? And, if only the good people can live here, are there no bad or wicked people among the Hindus and the Sikhs? And if there are wicked people among them, what would you say to them? Would you order them to leave and threaten to cut their throats with a sword if they refused to oblige? You have no right to consider anybody wicked or to kill him. We have committed excesses against the Muslims. There may be some exaggeration in the reports I receive every day. But ultimately I find that there is truth in those reports. When anything is done in the name of the Congress, the A.I.C.C. has to be summoned. The plenary session of the Congress is held once a year. It is like a big show and because there is such a big crowd nobody can even think clearly. But they know that the A.I.C.C. carries on its work with due deliberation and so they put their seal on what it does. Thus the A.I.C.C. is always on the alert. It is going to meet



the day after tomorrow. It is the Working Committee which has to place the agenda before the A. I. C. C. It is subservient to the A.I.C.C. If the Working Committee does not place the agenda before it, then the A.I.C.C. can say that they have not functioned well and the members of the Working Committee have to resign. The A.I.C.C. can form the Working Committee or terminate it. If the A.I.C.C. does not accept its proposals or makes great amendments to those proposals, then also it should resign. That is why the Working Committee says that it wants to do everything in the name of the A.I.C.C. If it does anything in its own name, it does not have the same effect. For, what is the use of 15 individuals proclaiming that not a single Muslim should be killed? If the same thing is done in the name of the A.I.C.C., its effect is much greater. That is why I have been advising the Congress Working Committee for the past three days that it should categorically state that this is the only thing it wishes to carry out. Let us not worry if this pleases the people or displeases them. If we are true servants of the Congress, then this is the only thing we have to do. Let the A.I.C.C. brush it aside if it so wishes. After all we, and also Pakistan, have to stand before the world. We do many things because we are worried about what the world may say. I would say that you should do only what you think is correct. Then the world too would regard it as correct. It is said that the word of the Panch (1 Elected members of a village panchayat; also, an arbitrator) is like the word of God. The world is like the Panch. That is why what the world says is divine justice in the true sense.

The Working Committee is in session today. It would be meeting again tomorrow. It is my prayer that it should place before the A.I.C.C. such a resolution which would bring victory to India and everybody would be able to live in peace here. It does not mean that we should let the traitors do as they please. But we should not take it for granted that a particular person is a traitor. If someone is proved to be a traitor, you may kill him, hang him, shoot him. But if you say that no Muslim can ever be loyal or that only the Hindus and the Sikhs have a monopoly of loyalty, then I would say that it would be a grave thing. I am confident that the Congress would never do such a thing. You must also pray that through the advice of the Congress we and the whole country as well as other parts of the world rise high. The Congress is meant only to raise the country high. But the Congress does not wish to raise itself by depriving anybody of his wealth or other property. The Congress would die for the sake of the whole world, but would not kill anyone. This has been the objective of the Congress, not since I entered it, but for many years. The Congress has tried to prevent the Europeans who come here from looting the country, so that people of Asia and Africa



could live in peace. India has to remain alive for this purpose. It is for this that India has attained her independence and for no other purpose.

[From Hindi] Prarthana Pravachan—II, pp. 71 - 77



49. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

November 14, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

When I was on fast (From February 10 to March 3, 1943.) in the Aga Khan Palace which was turned into a jail to imprison me, Sarojini Devi (Sarojini Naidu (1879-1949); poetess and orator; President of the Indian National Congress in 1925; Governor of U. P., 1947-49), Mirabehn (Nee Madeleine Slade; joined Gandhiji in 1925) and Mahadevbhai (Mahadev Desai (1892-1942); Gandhiji's private secretary from 1917 till his death on August 15, 1942), this *bhajan* ("I depend solely on my Rama, all others are of no avail," a bhajan by Tulsidas) had captured me. Here I do not wish to go into the causes of the fast.

I would like to mention only one thing in that connection, and it is that I survived for 21 days not because of the amount of water I used to drink, or the orange juice which I took for some days, or the extraordinary medical care, but because I had installed in my heart God whom I call Rama. I was so much attracted by the lines of this bhajan that I instructed the persons concerned to send me the correct words by telegram, as I had forgotten those words at the time. I was very happy when I received the whole bhajan by reply telegram. The essence of the bhajan is that Ramanama is everything and other gods count for nothing compared to Him. I am mentioning this instructive episode in my life because I want the A.I.C.C. members to think and deliberate with God in their hearts when they meet for the important session on Saturday. They will have to do so because they are representatives of all Congressmen. Hence, if the leading Congressmen have Satan instead of God in their hearts they are not true to their salt.

The Working Committee discussed for full three hours the resolutions to be placed before the A.I.C.C. During the discussion the question arose as to how the Hindu and the Sikh refugees could be honourably and safely sent back to their homes in West Punjab. They came to the conclusion that the trouble started from the Pakistan side, but they also realized that when the wrong was copied on such a large scale and when the Hindus and the Sikhs resorted to acts of retaliation in East Punjab and the adjoining areas of the Union, the question of where the trouble started became insignificant. If the A.I.C.C. could claim with confidence that so far as the Indian Union was concerned, the days of madness were over and sanity reigned from one end of the Union to the other, the Committee could also say that the Dominion of Pakistan would be obliged



to call back the Hindu and Sikh refugees with honour and safety. Such a situation can be created only when all Hindus and Sikhs install Rama in their hearts instead of Ravana. For, when you drive Satan out of your hearts and give up the present madness, every Muslim child will be able to move about with as much freedom as a Hindu or a Sikh child. Then, I have no doubt, the Muslim refugees who have left their homes under duress will gladly come over and the way will be cleared for the honourable and safe return of the Hindu and Sikh refugees to Pakistan.

Will my words have an echo in your hearts and will the A.I.C.C. be able to come to a wise and just conclusion?

[From Hindi], Prarthana Pravachan—II, pp. 78-9



50. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

November 15, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

I think you would naturally expect me to convey to you what I said at the A.I.C.C. meeting in the afternoon. But I do not feel like repeating what I said. As a matter of fact I had said the same thing which I have been telling you all these days. If I am sincerely regarded as the Father of the Nation, it is true only in the sense that, after my return from South Africa in 1915, I had a big hand in giving the Congress the shape it acquired later. This means that I exercised a great influence throughout the country. But today I cannot claim that. I am not worried about it; at least I should not be. Everyone should do their duty and leave the result to God. Nothing happens without the will of God. Our duty is only to make the effort. Hence, I had gone to attend the A.I.C.C. meeting with the idea that if I was allowed to address the members before the deliberations started, I would put before them what in my view is the truth.

I want to tell you something about controls. Since I spoke at length at the A.I.C.C. meeting on the other current topics of great importance, I could only briefly refer to the subject of controls.

I feel that continuing the controls is criminal. The policy of controls might have been good during the War. It may be good even today for a military nation. But it is harmful for India. I am sure that there is no scarcity of food or cloth in the country. The rains have not betrayed us this year. There is enough cotton in our country and enough people to work on the spinning-wheels and the looms. Apart from these, there are mills in the country. That is why I feel that both the controls are bad. We also have control on petrol, sugar, etc. I do not see any logical reason why we should have controls on such things. Controls make people lazy and dependent. Laziness and dependence are bad for the country at any time. I receive daily complaints about the controls. I hope that the representatives of the country would come to a wise decision and would advise the Government to remove the controls that encourage corruption, hypocrisy and black market.

[From Hindi], Prarthana Pravachan—II, pp. 80-1



51. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

November 16, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

It is indicated in the bhajan sung this evening that man's highest endeavour lies in trying to find God. He cannot be found in the temples or in the places of worship created by man. Nor can He be found by observing fasts, etc. God can be found only through love and that love should be not worldly but divine. Mirabai who saw God in everything lived in such love. For her God was all in all.

The ruler of the Rampur State is a Muslim. But that does not mean that it is a Muslim State. The late Ali Brothers (1 Mahomed Ali and Shaukat Ali) had taken me there many years ago (On March 6, 1919) and I stayed with them. I had the pleasure of meeting the then Nawab also, for he was a friend of the well-known nationalist Muslims of the day, the late Hakim Ajmal Khan (3 (1863-1927); Chief physician to Nawab of Rampur, 1892-1902; President of the Indian National Congress, 1921; First Chancellor of Jamia Millia Islamia, 1920-27) and the late Dr. Ansari (Dr. M. A. Ansari (1880-1936); eminent physician and surgeon, Member, Congress Working Committee; General Secretary of Indian National Congress in 1920, 1922, 1926, 1929, 1931 and 1932; its President in 1927; Chancellor, Jamia Millia Islamia, 1928-36). In those days the Hindus and the Muslims used to live there more peacefully and in greater harmony than today. But the Hindu friends who came last Sunday from that place to meet me had an altogether different tale to tell. They told me that though that State had acceded to the Indian Union it was still under the insidious influence of the Muslim League. Had that been the only obstacle, it could have been easily overcome. But there is also the Hindu Mahasabha assisted by members of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh who wish that all the Muslims should be driven away from the Indian Union.

The problem is how the Congressmen who are loyal to the Congress objectives can strengthen their position. Can they offer satyagraha with any hope of achieving success? They were happy to know that the A.I.C.C. is firm about the Congress objectives and is opposed to turning India into a country in which only Hindus could live as masters. The principles and objectives of the Congress are so broad-based that they include all the communities of the country. There is no room in it for narrow communalism. It is one of the oldest political organizations. Its only objective is service of the people. The Rampur Congressmen are gaining strength for their struggle by what is happening at the A.I.C.C. meeting. Even so, those people were keen to know



my views in the matter. I told them that I was not well acquainted with the situation prevailing there; so I could not lay down any law and I did not have the time either to study the situation. But this much I can say with full confidence that satyagraha is the greatest force in the world, before which the opposing forces which they had mentioned cannot survive for long.

These days it is a fashion to describe any armed opposition or opposition of any kind as satyagraha. That only harms society. Hence, if you understand the true meaning of satyagraha and realize that the living God, in the form of truth and love, is with the satyagrahi, then you would not hesitate to believe that no one can ever succeed against satyagraha. I am sorry to say what I was constrained to say about the Hindu Mahasabha and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh. I would be happy to know if I am wrong. I have met the Chief (M. S. Golwalkar, known as Guruji) of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh. I had attended one of the meetings of that organization. (Vide “Speech at R. S. S. Rally”, 16-9-1947.) Ever since, I have been reprimanded for having attended its meeting and have received many letters of complaints about the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh.

Though all of us are engaged in extinguishing the fire of communalism in the country, we should not forget our fellow-beings living outside India. You are well aware that the Indian Delegation (Which consisted of Vijayalakshmi Pandit, M. C. Setalvad, K. M. Panikkar and Maharaj Singh) to the United Nations is fighting for the rights of the Indians in South Africa with great courage and unity. All of you know Smt. Vijayalakshmi Pandit (b. 1900); daughter of Motilal Nehru; leader of Indian Delegation to U. N. O., 1946, 1947 and 1963; Ambassador of India in U. S. S. R., 1947-49, and the U. S. A., 1949-52; India’s High Commissioner in England, 1954-61; Governor of Maharashtra, 1962-64). She is the leader of the Indian Delegation not because she is the sister of Jawaharlal Nehru, but because she is able and carries on her work efficiently. She is accompanied by a good team and they all speak there with one voice. (During the debate at the United Nations Political Committee on November 15, M. C. Setalvad, protesting against the treatment of Indians in South Africa said: “Human rights and fundamental freedoms, which this Committee and Assembly are called upon to vindicate, are not only a matter of concern to the 250,000 Indians and other Asians settled in South Africa, they affect millions of human beings all over the world who look to this organization to protect them against the vicious doctrine of racial superiority and racial arrogance.”) I was pleased most by the speeches of Zafrullah Khan (Mohammad Zafrullah Khan, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Leader of the Pakistan Delegation to U. N. O., supported the Indian stand and said: “I do not know the Bible very well but I have been told that the Boers of South Africa are deeply attached to the Bible. Is the treatment of Indians in the Union in accordance with the teachings of a Christian



civilization?”) and Isphahani (M. A. H. Isphahani, Pakistan’s Ambassador to the U. S. A., stated during the debate: “The grievance of Indians is with regard to measures which entrench upon their own legitimate rights as nationals of the Union of South Africa and which reduce them to a position of inferiority and subservience to European settlers.”) which appeared in the newspapers today. At the United Nations, they said in plain words that Indians in South Africa were not given the same treatment as the whites. They are being insulted there and boycotted as if they were outcastes. It is true that the Indians in South Africa are not poor and hungry. But man cannot live by bread alone. Money has no value before human rights. And the South African Government does not give these rights to Indians there. The Hindus and the Muslims in India do not have divided views on the problems concerning the Indians living abroad. This only proves that the two-nation theory is incorrect. The lesson which I have learnt from it and which is also the lesson people should learn after my mentioning it today is that love is the highest thing. If the Hindus and the Muslims can speak unitedly outside India, they can certainly do so here as well, provided there is love in their hearts. Man is prone to commit mistakes. But he can rectify his mistakes if he wants to. This too is natural for man. It is always possible to forgive and forget. If we can do this today and can speak with one voice here as we do outside, then we would get over our present troubles. As far as South Africa is concerned, I hope their government and the whites there would profit by what is being openly said by distinguished Hindus and Muslim with one voice.

[From Hindi], Prarthana Pravachan—II, pp. 81-4



52. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

(As Gandhiji was observing silence, his written message in Hindustani was read out.)

November 17, 1947

Yesterday I spoke about Rampur and our countrymen in South Africa. Today I feel I must deal more fully with the latter subject. I have lived in South Africa for twenty years from 1893 to 1914 with a break probably of one year. During that long and formative period of my life I came naturally in closest contact with all kinds of Indians as also with the white settlers of that sub-continent almost as big as ours. Between then and now if South Africa has risen, India has made giant strides. What seemed to be impossible only the other day has happened. We need not go into the causes. The fact is that India has come into the British Commonwealth, i.e., she has exactly the same status as the Union of South Africa. Should members of one Dominion be helots in another Dominion? An Asiatic nation enters the Commonwealth for the first time in its history with the willing consent of all the members of the Commonwealth.

Mark now the following message that the Administrator Dr. S. P. Barnard of Orangia sent to the Natal Indian Congress of Durban five days after the entry of India in the Commonwealth:

As you are celebrating Independence of the new Dominions which you can consider a great day in the annals of Indian history, I hope all Indians in South Africa will now emigrate voluntarily to the new Dominions to act as missionaries of the gospel they have been taught in South Africa, namely, to live in peace and order and not to fight in communal riots in which hundreds are being killed in India.

It is worthy of note that Dr Barnard evidently doubts whether the entry was a great event. And then he treats the Natal Indian Congress with the gratuitous advice that the Indians of South Africa should immigrate to India and become “missionaries of the gospel they have been taught in South Africa, namely, to live in peace and order and not to fight in communal riots”. I very much fear that this message is typical of the average white man’s mind in the South African Dominion. Hence the series of disabilities on our countrymen for the crime of being Asiatics and having a coloured pigment. I appeal to the best western mind of South Africa to revise this anti-Asiatic and anti-colour prejudice. They have an overwhelming African population in their



midst. They are worse treated in some respects than the Asiatics. I urge the European settlers to read the signs of the times. Either this prejudice is wrong from every point of view or the British people and their fellow-members of the great Commonwealth have made an unpardonable mistake in admitting Asiatic countries as members. Burma is about to get her independence, (The Burma Independence Bill which was passed by the House of Commons on November 14, came into force on January 4, 1948.) Ceylon will presently become a member of the Commonwealth. (Under the Ceylon Independence Bill, passed by the House of Commons on November 26, Ceylon was to become a self-governing “near-Dominion” within the Commonwealth in February 1948.) What does it mean? Membership of the Commonwealth is, I am taught, as good as independence, if not superior to it. Responsible men and women of these independent States need to ponder well as to what they will do with their independence. Is all this movement towards multiplying independent States, though proper and healthy in itself, to result in another war more deadly, if possible, than the last two, or is it to end, as it should, in the promotion of universal brotherhood?

“A man becomes what he thinks”, says an Upanishad mantra (यथाचारी यथाचारी तथा भवती । पापकारी पापो भवति पाः पापेन । अथो खल्वाहः कामपथ एवार्थं पुष्प इती । स यथाकामो भवती तत्क्रतुर्भवति तत् कर्म कुरुतेः यत्कर्म कुरुते तदभिसंगते - Brihadaranyadopanishad, 4. 4.5. According as one acts, according as one behaves, so does he become. The doer of good becomes good, the doer of evil becomes evil. One becomes virtuous by virtuous action, bad by bad action. Others, however, say that a person consists of desires. As is his desire, so is his will; as is his will, so is the deed he does, whatever deed he does, that he attains.). Experience of wise men testifies to the truth of the aphorism. The world will thus become what its wise men think. An idle thought is no thought. It would be a serious mistake to say that it (the world) will become as the unthinking multitude act. They will not think. Like a mob they will follow. (This sentence has been translated from Parthana Pravachan—II.) Independence should mean democracy. Democracy demands that every citizen has the opportunity of receiving wisdom as distinguished from a knowledge of facts so called. South Africa has many wise men and women as it has also many able soldiers who are equally able farmers. It will be a tragedy for the world if they do not rise superior to their debilitating surroundings and give a proper lead to their country on this vexed and vexing problem of white supremacy. Is it not by this time a played-out game?

I must keep you for a moment over the much-debated question of control. Must the voice of the people be drowned by the noise of the pundits who claim to know all about the virtue of controls? Would that our ministers who are drawn from the people



and are of the people listened to the voice of the people rather than of the controllers of the red-tape which, they know, did them infinite harm when they were in the wilderness! The pundits then ruled with a vengeance. Must they do so even now? Will not the people have any opportunity of committing mistakes and learning by them? Do the ministers not know that they have the power to resume control wherever necessary, if decontrol is found to have been harmful to the people, in any instance out of the samples, by no means exhaustive, that I am giving below? The list before me confounds my simple mind. There may be virtue in some of them. All I contend is that the science, if it is one of controls, requires a dispassionate examination and then education of the people in the secret of controls in general or specified controls. Without examining the merits of the list I have received I pick out a few out of the samples given to me: Control on exchange, investment capital issues, opening branches of banks and their investments, insurance investments, all import and export of every kind of commodity, cereals, sugar, gur, cane, and syrup, vanaspati, textile, including woollens, power, alcohols, petrol and kerosene, paper, cement, steel, mica, manganese, coal, transport, installation of plant, machinery, factories, distribution of cars in certain provinces and tea-plantation.

Harijan, 30-11-1947



53. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

November 18, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

You must have read the resolutions (1 Vide Appendix “A.I.C.C. Resolutions”, 15/16/17-11-1947.) passed by the All-India Congress Committee. Some of those resolutions are useful in our life—in a good part of our life. It may as well be said that they are useful in the life of every man. They are not the resolutions merely to be implemented by the Government. For instance, the resolution on controls is the one which has to be implemented by Jawaharlal, Rajendra Prasad—now Rajendra Prasad is out—and also by others. They have to implement the policy of control on food, cloth and every other thing. We too have to do the same thing. If we resort to cheating and do not abide by the law, the result would be disastrous. When we can do with one yard of cloth, why should we buy ten yards and try to convince ourselves that no harm will be done if it is bought and tucked away in the house? If we develop such an attitude, become self-centred and not think of India we will turn into rogues.

The resolutions of the All-India Congress Committee are so important that I wanted to explain them to you one by one. I am still here, and I shall say something about the resolutions if I get a chance. But let me at least tell you the substance today. There is a resolution about bringing back the people who have left their homes in panic and this resolution applies to everybody. All of us, from Kanyakumari to Kashmir, belong to India. What if India has been divided all of us have to shoulder the responsibility because we are all brothers. If only one individual goes on stuffing his belly and does not care for the poor—if he eats for pleasure—he is stealing and commits a crime against India. What if India does not possess all the food grain she requires? The poor also should get food grain. If the rich get just a few *chhataks* (One-sixteenth of a seer) and are able to manage with the same I would consider that the rich and the poor have become equal. Apart from anyone else, let me talk about the rich person in whose house I am living. If you ask me whether Shri Ghanshyamdas manages with his legitimate quota, I would say he does not. I have got to tell the truth after all. Because he is a man of means, he is able to procure everything. I do not know if all those who come here are able to have milk. I get milk. I do not know how and from where that milk comes. His idea is to somehow get milk for me, whether he has to keep one goat or two; and to get the best quality of wheat, because I am, after all, a



Mahatma. He provides for me greens or fruits, whatever I want. I do not ask him where he gets those things. Something must be offered to the members of the Working Committee when they come to visit me. So, they are given fruit juice. He owns property worth crores of rupees. That is the case with the wealthy people. Millionaires can get all those things. But something can happen only when they deprive themselves a little. How else can the poor get things for themselves? Let the rich and the businessmen not indulge in profiteering. Let them become honest. They may make profit but just enough to satisfy their hunger. How wonderful if all of them would follow the same system about profits! Why should there be control on food? There is no need at all for it. It would be good indeed if everyone became like this.

The most important thing is that we cannot rest in peace till all the refugees go back to their homes. It is madness to kill the Muslims or drive away those who have run away from Pakistan in panic leaving their property there. Now the All-India Congress Committee has issued orders that people have to be kept wherever they are, and in comfort, and those who wish to return to their homes have to be sent back. Thousands of millionaires managed to come away even leaving their beautiful houses, but the poor are still left behind. I do not intend to speak about every point today. But the resolution shows where our duty lies. And that is the most important thing. If we take it for granted that the Muslims are a worthless lot, it is a grave sin. It is the supreme duty of all of us not to drive away anyone. People have seen the Working Committee resolution three or four days ago and they have also seen the indications in the Press. In spite of that the Muslims are running away. People say that the A.I.C.C. accepted this resolution because of my insistence. They say that the Muslims should go away, otherwise they would be killed. People ask me if I would be a witness to the slaughter of Muslims. I have already said what I would do—I would 'do or die'. When I am ready to die, the Muslims too should be ready to die if the need arises. We have become so heartless that we want them to walk 300 miles in this cold winter. It is said that there are not too many deaths in the camps - some ten or twenty die every day. Now, out of five, ten or fifty thousand if so many people die, has anyone tried to estimate how many people would die in India at this rate? Should it not be our concern as to how they die? Some of them do not get food, some have cholera, some get dysentery, or something else happens to them. But does anyone bother to know why these people die? We are worried about the availability of food and all the other things we need. We are always on the look-out for settling the Hindus and the Sikhs in the houses of Muslim evacuees. Of course, the situation is not the same everywhere. But



it is certainly so in many places. This has pained me very much and I have conveyed my feelings to you many times. Now even the A.I.C.C. has said that what has happened is highly deplorable. This thing has to be conveyed to the millions and it cannot be done in one day. There are great men in the Government—Jawahar, the Sardar, Rajendra Babu (but Rajendra Babu is not there now)—and how could [other members] displease them? That is why they agreed to it. I have heard that now there are even some Congressmen who think that the Muslims should not live here. They think that only then can Hinduism prosper. But they do not know that Hinduism is degenerating day by day. It would be dangerous if they did not change their attitude. All the members of the A.I.C.C. are the representatives of India as a whole. If they are all one at heart, as they should be, then the entire face of India would change. It is their duty not to allow anything else to happen. Their primary task is to find out how they can bring back all those who have fled from here. We would be restless till we brought back all the Muslims who have gone away from India. We have to create the necessary climate and that is not difficult. It is a great thing that there are still 350 million Muslims in India. Nobody knows how many have gone away and how many are going to come. Supposing all those who have gone away came back, it would mean no expenditure, for us, for they would be living in their own houses, since they have their houses here. Our job is only to return their houses to them. But are all those houses vacant? Refugees have occupied those houses by force. But they would have to be accommodated in spite of that. If we act without proper thought and if our hearts are not clean, outsiders would wonder if the representatives of India were hypocrites. I think they are not. Those days are over when we used to be angry with the Muslims and wanted them to go away. Today we consider them as our brethren.

I would like to believe that the people of Delhi and Gurgaon have become good. When I had been to Panipat recently, I saw people living in amity. But now I hear that the refugees have occupied the houses of the Muslims and the Muslims want to go away to Pakistan. The Muslims might say that they did not want to go to Pakistan willingly as neither any delicacies nor good clothes would be available there. And how could things be otherwise? The people there are in the same condition as we are here. After all, it is not as if there were more provisions for them there while they had nothing here. Those who have gone away write back that it would have been much better if they had remained in India. Having left their hearth and home, they are now living in camps and are in great distress. It is bound to be so. Then, why do the Muslims of Panipat want to go to Pakistan? If that is so, Panipat is a test for me and I too may have



to go there. Panipat is about 50 miles from here. It cannot be called a distant place. It is just like Delhi. Now, even if a single Muslim is forced to go to Pakistan, it would hurt me and it would hurt you. Of course, when they stay here, they must get food and clothes from the money they receive. They are industrious, they earn and subsist on it. How will they live if they earn money but cannot have food? If the craftsmen, who have been like brothers, have to leave just because refugees from the Punjab have come, nothing could be worse than that. I would tell all the refugees at Panipat that they should give up the houses of the Muslims and the Muslims too should say that they would stay there. They should say that they do not need police for protection and they would live in amity. The police should only see the distribution of food and clothes. They need do nothing more. Then I would say that the A.I.C.C. has done a good thing and we are all with it. We may not be four-anna members of the Congress, but we respect the organization. Let us today also support and follow what this organization, which has served the country all these days, is with full deliberation saying in these adverse circumstances. That is all I would like to say for the day.

[From Hindi], Prarthana Pravachan—II, PP. 88-93



54. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

November 19, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

Last evening I referred to the main Resolution on Hindu-Muslim relations passed by the A.I.C.C. But unfortunately today itself I have to cite an instance to show how that Resolution is being rendered futile in Delhi. I had never imagined that on the very evening when I was expressing my doubt about the behaviour of the public, that doubt would be proved right in the heart of old Delhi. I was told last night that a large crowd of Hindus and Sikhs had gathered in front of a Muslim's shop in Chandni Chowk. Though the shop belonged to a Muslim, the owner had abandoned it and gone away. The shop had been given to a refugee on condition that he would give it up when the owner returned. Fortunately, the owner of the shop has returned. He did not want to give up his business for good. The officer in charge of the allotment came to the refugee and asked him to vacate the shop. The refugee hesitated at first, but then agreed to vacate it when the owner came to take possession in the evening. When the officer went again in the evening he found that instead of vacating the shop the occupant had informed his friends who had collected there to overawe whoever [forced them] to vacate it. The few constables at Chandni Chowk could not control the crowd, and they sent for more help. The police or, may be, military arrived and fired in the air. The crowd dispersed in panic, but a pedestrian was stabbed in the bargain. Fortunately the wound did not prove to be fatal. But this demonstration of the trouble-makers had a strange result. That shop was not vacated. I do not know if the order of that officer was defied or the shop has ultimately been vacated. Nevertheless, I do hope that the Government will not fail to punish the culprit if it has to retain its true authority under our precious freedom. Otherwise, the Government will have no authority at all. I am told that the crowd of Hindus and Sikhs was not less than two thousand.

I have understated the news that was given to me. If there is room for correction and if it is brought to my notice I will gladly let you know about it.

This is not the only thing. In other parts of Delhi, too, attempts are being made to drive the Muslims out of their houses, so that the Hindu and the Sikh refugees could be accommodated there. The Sikhs go about brandishing their swords and threaten the Muslims with dire consequences if they refuse to give up their houses. I am also



told that the Sikhs drink liquor, the consequences of which can be well imagined. They dance about with their naked swords and scare away the pedestrians. I am also informed that according to custom Muslims do not sell kababs (Meat cutlets) and other meat preparations in Chandni Chowk and nearby areas. But the Sikhs and perhaps other refugees, too, freely sell these forbidden things there. This hurts the feelings of the Hindus in that locality. The nuisance has grown to such an extent that people cannot easily pass through the crowded Chandni Chowk. They are afraid of being insulted. I appeal to my refugee friends that they should not indulge in such things for their own sake and for the sake of the country.

As for the kirpans, the Sikhs have been forbidden by law to carry kirpans larger than the prescribed size. While this law is in force, many Sikh friends come to me with a request that I should try to have this restriction withdrawn. They told me about the judgement passed by the Privy Council several years ago which permitted the Sikhs to carry kirpans of any size. I have not read that judgement. I think the judges have interpreted kirpan to mean sword of any size. The then Punjab Government, in order to carry out the Privy Council's decision, declared that everyone was free to keep a sword. That is why in the Punjab men carry swords of any size they choose.

I have no sympathy with the Punjab Government or the Sikhs in this matter. Some Sikh friends have brought to my notice certain portions from the Granthsaheb which support my view that the kirpan is not a weapon to be used to attack the innocent. Only the Sikhs abiding by the tenets of the Granthsaheb can use the kirpan for the protection of innocent women, children and old and helpless people. That is the reason why one Sikh is regarded equal to one-and-a-quarter lakh opponents. That is why any Sikh who takes intoxicants, who gambles, or is prey to other vices, has no right to keep a kirpan which is a symbol of purity and restraint and which is to be used only on particular occasions in a prescribed manner.

In my view, it is not only futile but also harmful to seek the help of the now defunct judgement of the Privy Council to justify the indiscriminate use of the kirpan. We have just freed ourselves from foreign rule. It is highly improper to do away with all necessary restrictions in our state of freedom, because, without those restrictions, society cannot make progress. Hence, I would tell my Sikh friends that they should not bring the great Sikh religion into disrepute by using the kirpan for doubtful purposes. Let them not destroy a religion which has been shaped by a number of martyrs in whose martyrdom the world takes great pride.



I wish to draw your attention to another thing. I have been informed about a refugee camp where the army has been accused of rude behaviour. The entire life of the camp should be a model from the point of view of inner and outer cleanliness. To preserve such cleanliness [the police and the army] should vie with each other. Hence I hope that the information I have received does not apply to these protectors of law and order, and that it is only an exception. The army and the police should be the first to experience the glow and excitement of freedom. Let not the people get a chance to say that good behaviour can be expected of them only under strict discipline imposed on them from above. They have to establish through correct behaviour that they too can become good and ideal citizens of India. If these protectors of law disregard law itself, it would be difficult to carry on administration at all. And it would be all the more difficult to implement the Resolutions of the All-India Congress Committee.

After presenting the gloomy side of the picture, I would now like to present the bright side also. I have just heard an eye-witness account of great valour which I am going to narrate to you.

Mir Maqbool Sherwani was a young brave leader of the National Conference at Baramula. He had just entered his thirtieth year. On learning that he was an important leader of the National Conference the invaders tied him to two poles near the Nishat Talkies. They first beat him up and then told him that he should give up the National Conference and its leader Sheikh Abdullah, the lion of Kashmir. They told Sherwani that he should swear loyalty to the Provisional Government of Azad Kashmir which had its headquarters at Palundry.

Sherwani refused to give up the National Conference under pressure. He made it clear to the assailants that the Sheikh was the head of the Kashmir Government, that the Indian army had already reached Kashmir and, before long, would repel the assailants.

On hearing this, the assailants were enraged and were in panic. They riddled his body with fourteen bullets. They cut his nose and disfigured his face and pasted a notice on his body: "This man is a traitor. His name is Sherwani. All traitors would be treated in the same way."

But within 48 hours of this ruthless murder and bloodshed, Sherwani's prophecy came true. The invaders fled from Baramula in panic and the Indian army chased them away.



Anybody, whether Hindu, Sikh, Muslim or anyone else, would be proud of such martyrdom.

A friend of mine has related an instance of a proud moment whose lustre would not fade even in the most painful situation and an instance of friendship which proves its worth in the moment of greatest trial. It is the story of Narayan Singh, a Sikh ex-officer. He has lost enormous property in West Punjab. Now he is in Delhi. He has nothing left, which means that he would be compelled to beg or to let death claim him. He met an old friend who he did not want to suffer on his account because he was not bothered by his own misfortune. The Sikh officer was very happy to meet Ali Shah, his old friend and colleague. Ali Shah too has lost his entire property, but not because of communal frenzy but because of some other misfortune. He too is a courageous man like Narayan Singh and both of them are proud of their friendship. When they met after a separation of twenty-five years, they were so happy that they forgot their misfortune.

[From Hindi], Prarthana Pravachan—II, pp. 93-8



55. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

November 20, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

I have received two notes from the same person. In one note he says that he has given up his job and wishes to work under me. In the second note he expresses his desire to sing a bhajan at the prayer. As for his first wish, I can't help saying that it was a mistake to have given up his job. It is true that during the British days I had exhorted people to give up their jobs and non-co-operate with the Government. But that is not the case now. Anyone who wishes to serve his country can do so while carrying on with his job. If every wage-earner does his job honestly and without indulging in any kind of violence, he is no doubt serving the country. The writer of the note should realize that I have no work to offer him. If he wants to render service, he must do something for the goshala about which I am going to talk presently.

As for singing bhajan at the prayer, it is not that everyone can be allowed to sing. Only people known to be servants of God can do so with prior permission.

I was happy to find the camp (The Okhla camp which Gandhiji had visited in the afternoon along with Sucheta Kripalani and others) admirably clean. There are dharmashalas at various places for the pilgrims who come there during the fairs. These fairs are organized there periodically. At present these dharmashalas are being used for the refugees. There is some difficulty about water supply, which the officials are trying to remedy. I have no doubt that if water supply can be guaranteed, many more refugees can be accommodated there.

Now that I am talking about the refugees, I shall speak about their shortcomings to which my attention has been drawn. I am told that the refugees are indulging in black market among themselves. The officers who are in charge of looking after the refugees are themselves, I am told, at fault. I learn that it is impossible to find a place in the camps without bribing the officers who are in charge of the camps. As regards other things also, their behaviour is not above reproach. True, all officers cannot be guilty, but the entire ship can sink because of one sinner.

Then I am told that the refugees also indulge in petty thieving. I expect honest and straightforward behaviour from them. I am told that some of the quilts provided to the refugees to protect them against cold are torn up, the cotton thrown away and



the chintz cover is used for making shirts, etc. I have been told of many such things, but I do not wish to waste your time by narrating all the misdeeds of the refugees. I wish promptly to come to the topic of the evening.

In a locality called Kishanganj in Delhi a goshala is having its annual function. Acharya Kripalani is going to preside over that function tomorrow and I am being pressed to attend the function at least for ten minutes. I felt that I should not attend any function just for show. I cannot do or see anything in ten minutes. Moreover, I am so much involved in these communal problems that I have no time to attend to other things. Hence, I expressed my helplessness and, realizing my difficulty, the organizers excused me. They told me that they would be satisfied if I would say something about gosev— especially about goshalas, during the prayer meeting. I readily agreed to do so. I have stated in plain words that the task of preservation and increasing the cattle wealth of India and taking proper care of the cow and calf is much more difficult than attaining political freedom. (Vide “How to Save the Cow”, 22-8-1947.) I claim that I am working with faith and devotion in this field. I also claim that I have true knowledge of how the cow can be saved. However, I do admit that so far I have not exercised any influence on the public which may lead them to give to the problem the attention it deserves. Those who manage the goshalas know how to spend money or collect funds for the purpose. But they have no knowledge at all about rearing the cattle scientifically. They do not know how to rear the cow so that it may yield more milk. They do not know how to rear the oxen or improve their breed.

That is why, throughout India, goshalas, instead of being the institutions where one could learn the art of rearing the cattle, where there would be ideal dairies providing the best quality of milk and the best breed of cows and oxen, are places where the cattle are herded together in a pitiable condition. The result is that India, instead of being a prominent country where the best breed of cattle and the best quality of milk should be available at the cheapest rate, is the lowest in the world in this regard. The people managing the goshalas do not even know that the dung and urine of the cattle can be used most profitably. Nor do they know how best to utilize the dead cattle. The result is that because of their ignorance crores of rupees are being lost. An expert has stated that our cattle wealth is only a burden on the country and deserves to be destroyed. I do not agree with this view. But, if the general ignorance in this matter persists for some time more, I will not be surprised if our cattle become



a burden on the country. That is why I hope that the management of this goshala would do its best to make it an ideal institution from every point of view.

[From Hindi], Prarthana Pravachan—II, pp. 98-101



56. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

November 21, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

While I am making my speech before you, the goshala is probably celebrating its annual function about which I told you yesterday. I would like to mention one thing. In the course of my speech yesterday I did not mention about the dairies conducted for the soldiers all over India. Dr. Rajendra Prasad told me that these dairies are still in operation. Many years ago I had visited (Vide the preceding item. 1 On June 12, 1927; vide "Letter to William Smith", 14-6-1927.) the Central Dairy at Bangalore. It used to function under the supervision of Col. Smith. I had seen some beautiful cattle there. One of them was a prize cow. It was believed that she was the best cow in the whole of Asia. I don't quite remember if she used to give a daily yield of 75 lbs. Of milk or whether she really yielded so much milk at one time. That cow used to roam about without any restriction anywhere she chose. Fodder used to be kept for her at various places, which she could eat any time she chose. This is the bright side of the picture. I have not seen the other side of it. But I am authentically told that a large number of male calves are killed, because all of them cannot be turned into bullocks that can carry heavy weight. These dairies are spread over hundreds of acres of land if not more. They are meant specially for European soldiers, and crores of rupees have been spent on them. Now that we no longer have the British soldiers in India, I do not deem them necessary. I am sure that if the Indian soldiers know that such expensive dairies are being run for their sake, they will feel ashamed. I am also certain that the Indian soldiers will not demand what ordinary citizens cannot claim as a matter of right.

The most authentic and perhaps complete information about the cow and the buffalo can be found in a voluminous treatise (Cow in India, published in two volumes. For Gandhiji's preface to it, vide "Foreword to Cow in India", 20-5-1945.) written by Shri Satis Chandra Das Gupta of the Khadi Pratishthan. It is not filled with extracts from other books but is based on his personal experience and written during one of his imprisonments. The book has been translated into Bengali and Hindustani. Those who read it carefully would find it extremely useful in improving the cattle breed and increasing the yield of milk. There is a comparative study of the cow and the buffalo also in the book. (Gandhiji then referred to a question from the audience, "What is meant by 'Hindu'? What is the origin of that word? Is there anything called Hinduism?")



These are all relevant questions. I am no great scholar of history. I do not even claim to be a learned man. But I have read in an authoritative book on Hinduism that the word “Hindu” does not occur in the Vedas. When Alexander the Great invaded India, the people living in the region east of the river Sindhu, which is called the Indus by the English-speaking Indians, were described as the Hindus. The letter ‘S’ of the Sindhu became ‘H. in Greek. The religion of the people living in this region came to be known as Hinduism which, as you are well aware, is the most tolerant of all religions. It gave shelter to the Christians who had escaped from the harassment of the people of other religions. Besides, it also gave shelter to the Jews known as Beni-Israel and also to the Parsis. I feel proud to belong to Hinduism which embraces all religions and is very tolerant. The Aryan scholars followed the Vedic religion and India was first known as Aryavarta. I do not wish that once again the country should be known as Aryavarta. The Hinduism of my conception is complete in itself. Of course, it includes the Vedas, but it also includes many other things. I do not think it is improper to say that I can proclaim the same faith in the greatness of Islam, Christianity, Zoroastrianism and Judaism without in any way impairing the greatness of Hinduism. Such Hinduism would live so long as the sun shines in the sky. Tulsidas has expressed this idea in his couplet:

Compassion is the root of religion, pride the root of sin. Do not give up compassion, says Tulsi, so long as there is life in you.

The sister (Sucheta Kripalani, vide “Speech at Prayer Meeting”, 20-11-1947.) who accompanied me during my visit to the Okhla camp was upset because she wondered if the misconduct in some of the refugee camps I had mentioned was related to the Okhla camp. I paid a very hurried visit to the Okhla camp, and so it is impossible to mention any such thing about it. In my speech I have mentioned the misconduct in the refugee camps in general.

I cannot help mentioning the fact that according to the information received by me 137 mosques have been almost destroyed in Delhi during the riots. Some of them have been converted into temples. There is one such mosque near Connaught Place which can never remain unnoticed by anyone. Today there is a tricolour flag flying over it. It has been changed into a temple by installing an idol in it. Desecrating the mosques in this manner is a blot on Hinduism and Sikhism. It is gross adharma in my view. The blot which I have mentioned cannot be wiped out by saying that even the Muslims in Pakistan have desecrated the Hindu temples or changed them into mosques. In my



view, any such act can only destroy religion, whether it is Hinduism, Sikhism or Islam. (Gandhiji then read out the A.I.C.C. resolution on this subject, vide Appendix “A.I.C.C. Resolutions”, 15/16/17-11-1947.)

Even at the risk of having to stay longer than usual at the prayer meeting I would like to say one thing in the end as a matter of duty. I am told that the Roman Catholics are being harassed near Gurgaon. This has happened in a village called Kanhai which is 25 miles away from Delhi. An Indian Roman Catholic priest and a Christian missionary came to meet me. They showed me a letter which gave the description of the harassment of the Roman Catholics at the hands of the Hindus. Surprisingly, the letter was written in Urdu. I think the Hindus, the Sikhs and others living in that area can speak only Hindustani and write only in the Urdu script. The persons who brought the information told me that the Roman Catholics were threatened, that they would have to suffer if they did not leave the village. I hope this threat is unfounded and that the Christian men and women would be allowed to follow their religion and carry on their work without any hindrance. Now that we have freed ourselves from political bondage, they, too, are entitled to the same freedom to follow their religion and occupations as they had under the British. The freedom we have achieved does not imply the rule of Hindus in the Indian Union or that of Muslims in Pakistan. I have already told you in one of my speeches (Vide “Speech at Prayer Meeting”, 21-10-1947.) that when the anger of the Hindus and the Sikhs against the Muslims abated it was likely to be directed against one another. But I did not expect my prophecy would come true so soon. The anger against the Muslims has not yet completely calmed down. As far as I know, these Christians are absolutely innocent. It has been pointed out to me that their only fault is that they are Christians. Their greater fault is that they eat beef and pork. When out of curiosity I asked the priest if there was any truth in it, he said that those Roman Catholics had on their own given up eating beef some time ago. If such childish prejudice persists, the future of India is bound to be dark. When the priest was at Rewari, he was deprived of his bicycle, and he narrowly escaped death. Would this misery end only with the extinction of all non-Hindus and non-Sikhs?

[From Hindi], Prarthana Pravachan—II, pp. 101-5



57. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

November 22, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

I have received information about some instances of similar harassment (Vide “Speech at Prayer Meeting”, 21-11-1947.) to the Christians at Sonapat also. I am told that the Christians were first requested to allow use of their buildings for the refugees. They readily agreed, for which they were also thanked. But that gratitude turned into a curse, for their other buildings were also forcibly occupied for accommodating the refugees. They were then told that they should leave Sonapat if they did not wish to subject themselves to misery. If my information is correct, it is clear that the disease is spreading and no one can say where it would lead India.

While discussing the subject with friends I was told that so long as the atrocities in Pakistan do not abate, not much improvement can be expected in the India Union. In support of this argument I was shown Press reports about what is happening in Lahore. I personally do not accept Press reports to be absolutely correct. I would also warn the newspaper readers not to be easily carried away by the newspaper reports. Even the best of newspapers are not above giving exaggerated reports and embellishing them. But supposing what you read in the newspapers is all correct, still we should never imitate bad examples.

Imagine a square frame to which no slate is fixed. If you mishandle that frame its right angles would become acute and obtuse angles. But if the frame is once again held properly at one end, the remaining three angles would automatically become right angles.

Similarly, if the people and the Government of the Indian Union behave well, I have no doubt at all that Pakistan would also give proper response and the whole of India would once again come to her senses. This harassment of the Christians who have, in my view, committed no crime, should be an indication that it is not proper to let this madness spread. And, if India has to keep its prestige before the world, this madness should be combated sternly and at once.

There are doctors, lawyers, students, teachers, nurses, etc., among the refugees. If they segregate themselves from the poor refugees, they would not be able to learn anything from their own misfortune. I feel that all professional and non-



professional, rich and poor refugees should live together and build ideal cities just as the rich people of Lahore made Lahore an ideal city which the Hindus and the Sikhs had perforce to give up. Such cities would relieve the burden of overcrowded cities like Delhi and this would lead to better health and progress of the people living there. If over two lakh refugees at the Kurukshetra camp become ideal in the matter of inner and outer cleanliness, and if the professional and the rich people live with the poor on terms of equality and live a life of contentment in these colonies of tents, and if they do their own work, beginning with sanitation, etc., and engage themselves in some useful work throughout the day, they would cease to be a burden on the Government treasury. And the people in the city, in their turn, would not stop at merely admiring the simplicity and co-operation of the refugees, but would feel ashamed of their own lives, and follow the good example of the refugees. Then the present bitterness and mutual jealousies would vanish in no time. And the refugees, no matter how large their number may be, would no longer be a matter of worry for the Union and local Governments. The world would admire the ideal life of these millions of refugees.

In the end, I would talk about removing controls, especially the controls on food and cloth. The Government hesitates to remove controls because it feels that there is a real scarcity of food and cloth in the country, and the prices of these commodities will shoot up if the controls are removed and the poorer sections will have to suffer a great deal. The Government thinks that the poor can be saved from starvation by continuing the controls and that they can be provided sufficient clothes. The Government is suspicious about the traders, cultivators and the middlemen. It fears that these people are waiting like hawks for the removal of controls, so that they could fill their pockets with tainted money at the cost of the poor. The Government has to make a choice between the two evils. It thinks that continuing rather than removing the controls is the lesser evil.

That is why I appeal to the traders, middlemen and cultivators that they should dispel these doubts about them and assure the Government that the prices will not rise when the controls are removed. It may not be possible to root out black market and underhand dealings by removing the controls but the poor would have a much easier time than now.

[From Hindi], Prarthana Pravachan—II, pp. 106-8



58. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

(Gandhiji exhorted the audience to observe silence which was being disturbed by the murmur among women who were present in a large number. Complete silence was then restored.)

November 23, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

Gandhiji apologized to the radio men for his occasional breach of the rule that his speech should not exceed twenty minutes, not even fifteen, if possible. He said that he could not always observe the rule for his main purpose was to reach the hearts of the audience that was physically before him. The radio came next. He did not know whether there was any arrangement whereby the radio could record longer speeches. He was not in the habit of speaking without purpose or for the sake of hearing his own voice. (This paragraph is from Harijan.)

A gentleman writes to ask me whether one should take to violence if one's rights are not granted. We cannot secure our rights through violence. I would even say that we can secure nothing through violence. Apparently, it seems we can get our things that way. But how? Supposing a child is having a rupee. If I slap him twice and take away that rupee, I may have the satisfaction of having got the rupee, but how much would I have lost in the bargain? What could the poor child do? But it would prick me that I snatched away the rupee from the poor child by beating him. Of course there are any number of such rogues in the world. But I cannot do such a thing. I have no right to deprive anyone like that. Snatching away something would have a bad result. That is why I say that we cannot demand rights with violence. There is only one way of securing our rights which I have already explained. (Vide "Speech at Prayer Meeting", 28-6-1947 and "Speech at Prayer Meeting", 29-6-1947.) Everybody approved of it. I have stated my view about the rights of the people and how they can be achieved. I would say that there is nothing like a right. For the one who has no duties there are no rights either. In other words, all rights emanate from duties — if there is no duty, there is no right either. When I do my duty, it brings some result and that is my right. For instance, I eat because it is my duty to do so. If I eat for pleasure, I fall victim to some disease or other. If I eat because it is my duty to eat, if I pray to God, if I serve the world, that itself is my right. What is my right? It is the right to serve. You would ask me how that can be called a right. But you would understand this if you thought over it a little. I would say that that itself becomes the right. Suppose I work for the whole day and earn eight



annas — I get those eight annas as my right. How did I have that right? Because I worked. If I do not work and take eight annas, I appropriate that amount, I do not have it as my right. I can have a right only when I fulfil my promise to work and that too sincerely in thought, word and deed. But if I do not work with my heart in it, if I exploit the employer and deceive him because he is not noticing it, then it is a sin. When I know that everybody is getting a rupee I too want to have a rupee for myself. But when can I have it? Only when I have the employer's permission. I would ask him why, when everybody is getting one rupee, I should work for eight annas only, and would ask for at least fifteen annas. He may say that I should work for eight annas or leave. What should I do in that case? Should I burn his property? Obstruct his work? Do picketing? Go on fast? If I say that I would resign but not work for eight annas, then I would be acting like a gentleman. I would say that whatever you do, you must do it in a decent way. Decency means following one's religion, doing one's duty and earning one's rights non-violently by performing one's duty. Let us not try to get anything through violence — that is the only way to sustain the world. Otherwise things go wrong in the world.

I have already talked to you about the Christians. Today I will tell you about the Harijans. It is a matter of shame for us that there are Harijans in Rohtak, or, say, in Rohtak district—they were there everywhere before and are still there. There are the Jats and perhaps Ahirs too. They felt that the Harijans were their slaves and they could get any work done by them. Once again the question of their rights came and they felt that the Harijans were born slaves. They may be given water and food but they can get nothing by right. I regard this as arrogance. This was prevalent during the days of the British and now it is all the more there. These poor Harijans are timid, so they came to me and asked me what they should do in the face of harassment. Should they remain slaves or die or leave Rohtak? It is quite understandable that they cannot leave the place. If they leave Rohtak, other people would suffer, because their work would be affected. But this means that Harijans have to remain slaves forever. And so, those poor people came. Some of them study in schools, some are studying further and some lag behind; some even learn crafts, but what can they tell those who are harassing them? We have now reached a stage when we do not stop to think where we are going. During the British days we used to be afraid of being beaten or killed. Now that the alien rule has ended we think that no one can do us any harm. We feel that we can even intimidate a judge if we are brought before him. We think that the judge can do nothing to us. We have become so arrogant. The result is that the Harijans are ruined. So, I suggested to them that they should go to Thakkar Bapa (A. V.



Thakkar (1869-1951); joined the Servants of India Society in 1914; established the Bhil Seva Sadan in 1922; General Secretary, Harijan Sevak Sangh; President, Gujarat Antyaja Seva Mandal; Secretary, Kasturba Gandhi National Memorial Trust, 1944-51; established the Bharatiya Adimjati Sevak Sangh). He was born just to serve the Harijans and the tribals. He does everything for the Harijans. So those people went to him and came back to tell me that he was not doing anything for them. I knew what they wanted. They are seated right here. I told them that they should go to Dr. Gopichand (Gopichand Bhargava (1889-1966); President, Harijan Sevak Sangh in the Punjab; Chief Minister of the Punjab, 1947-51). What if he has become the Premier now? He used to attend every work of the Harijan Sevak Sangh at one time. I decided to meet him since he was coming here today, and I met him. But what can be done when the people there have become such tyrants, resort to coercion and refuse to listen? The British rule is no longer there, and the people cannot behave like that. Then what should the Harijans do? So, I thought that today I should talk about the sad plight of the Harijans. Can we not do even this much? What is our duty today? So far we have acted against dharma in regarding the Harijans as untouchables and slaves. We committed that mistake, that sin, and the Harijan Sevak Sangh came into being (On October 26, 1932, initially under the name of Anti-Untouchability League, with G. D. Birla as President and A. V. Thakkar as General Secretary) by way of expiation. The Sangh has done considerable work. But not all Hindus have taken the same stand. Millions of Hindus have not even accepted the Sangh. If all Hindus had accepted it, where was the need for me to narrate this sad tale? During the days of the British we used to abuse them and say that we would become good if the British did not rule us. Now the British have gone. But have we become good or bad? I would say that there is more degeneration now than before. We used to commit excesses and are committing them even now. First we oppressed the Muslims. This too was a sin. Forget that Pakistan has come into being, don't think of it. If one man commits a sin should we also do the same? You will realize that it is bad if you think over it. One wrong leads to another. We have killed a large number of people. We have acquired false courage and we are determined to kill the Christians, and then we want to have Jatistan, Ahiristan and so many separate states. But no one is keen about building up India. We must accept the Harijans. They too are Hindus like us. They are not the fifth caste. Hinduism has no fifth varna; there are only four, and these four varnas are not graded as high or low. Among these four varnas the first teaches religion, the second protects people, the third practises trade — to collect millions of rupees, not for personal use but for the welfare of the people — and the fourth serves the society. But people belonging to the four varnas can mingle with one another. It is not as though a Shudra, if he became a barrister, could



not practise law. He can serve even after becoming a barrister. One who teaches religion serves, so does the one who practises trade and is in employment and also the one who sweeps. All these four are fields of service. The one who teaches religion has to learn more. But that does not mean that he commits a sin by giving up his profession and going in for another. It is not that he cannot do that. Similarly, we created so many castes and now are creating the fifth varna. This is wrong, it is an act of wickedness. Everything will be alright if each follows his religion. Now, when we are having the reins of power in our hands, it seems to me that things would be all right if the Hindus and the Sikhs followed their respective religions. I have finished for the day and the meeting is also over.

[From Hindi], Prarthana Pravachan—II, pp. 109-12



59. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

(As Gandhiji was observing silence, his written message in Hindustani was read out.)

November 24, 1947

You are good enough, when I enter the prayer-ground, to make ample room for me and my daughters to allow us to pass through. I would urge you to observe the same orderliness when after the prayer I go out. There is an unseemly rush to touch me as I pass. The crowd presses upon me. I know and value your affection. I want it to take the shape not of effusiveness but of some constructive service of the country such as I have pointed out on many an occasion and in my numerous writings. The first and foremost today is communal harmony. Formerly the discord was of a negative character. Today it is of the most virulent type. The Hindus and the Sikhs on the one hand and the Muslims on the other have become enemies of each other with the shameful results which we have already seen.

Those who attend the prayer should not only be free from rancour against one another, but should actively assist in reestablishing the communal harmony which was our pride during the Khilafat days. Have I not attended the huge friendly gatherings of those days? They had gladdened my heart when I witnessed them. Will those days never return?

Take the latest tragedy that took place in the heart of the capital city yesterday. Some Hindu and Sikh refugees are reported to have gone out to an empty Muslim house and unlawfully attempted to occupy it. A scuffle ensued and some were injured, though none fatally. This incident, bad as it was, was exaggerated out of all proportion. The first report was that four Sikhs were murdered. The sequel was to be expected. Retribution followed and several stabbings took place. A new technique seems to have been established now. The Sikhs with drawn swords, which seem to have taken the place of little kirpans, with or without the Hindus, visit Muslim houses and demand evacuation. This is a monstrous state of things in this, the capital city, if the report is true. If it is untrue, it may be dismissed. If it is true, it demands urgent attention not only from the authorities but the public as well. The former will be impotent, if the public is not behind them.

I am not sure what my duty is in this case. Things are evidently going from bad to worse. The full moon day of Kartik will soon be upon us. All kinds of rumours have



been pouring in. I hope that they are all untrue, as they proved to be for the Dussehra and the Bakr-Id.

One lesson to be learnt from these rumours is that we are living a disturbed life, which is not good for any State or nation. Every servant of the nation has to seriously consider the part he has to play towards the abatement of this corroding nuisance.

It is well to consider at this stage a long letter from Sardar Sant Singh of Lyallpur, former M. L. A. (Central). He has put up a forcible defence for the Sikhs. He has read into my prayer speech (Vide "Speech at Prayer Meeting", 19-11-1947.) of last Wednesday a meaning which the words do not bear and certainly never meant by me. Perhaps the good Sardar does know of my intimate connection with the Sikhs ever since my return from South Africa in 1915. There was a time when my word was law to them as to the Hindus and the Muslims. Manners have changed with the times. But I know that I have not. The Sardar, perhaps, does not view the present tendency among the Sikhs as I, their avowed, dispassionate friend without any axe of my own to grind, can and do. I speak freely

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and frankly because I am their true friend. I make bold to say that many a time the Sikh situation was saved because the Sikhs in general chose to follow my advice. I need, therefore, no reminder that I should be cautious about what I say about the Sikhs or any other community. Let the Sardar and every Sikh, who wishes well by them and is not carried away by the prevailing current, help in ridding the great and brave community of madness, drunkenness and all the vices that flow from it. Let them sheathe the sword which they have flourished loudly and used badly. Let them not be fooled by the Privy Council judgement if it means that the kirpan is a sword of any length. A kirpan ceases to be sacred when it goes into the hands of an unprincipled drunkard or when it is used anyhow. A sacred thing has to be used on sacred and lawful occasions. A kirpan is undoubtedly a symbol of strength, which adorns the possessor only if he exercises amazing restraint over himself and uses it against enormous odds against himself.

The Sardar will pardon me when I say that I have fairly studied the history of the Sikhs and drunk deep of the essence of the Granthsaheb. Tested by the tenets of that scripture, what is said to have been done by the Sikhs is indefensible and suicidal. The



Sikh bravery and integrity must not be frittered away on any account. It can be an asset to the whole of India. In my opinion, it is a menace which it should not be.

Of course, it is nonsense to suggest that the Sikhs are enemy No. 1 of Islam. Have I not been described as such? Is the honour to be divided between them and me? I have never desired the honour. My whole life is a standing testimony against the charge. Can the same be said of the Sikhs? Let them learn the lesson from the Sikhs who stand behind the Sher-e-Kashmir (Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah; literally “the Lion of Kashmir”). Let them repent of the follies committed in their name.

I know the vicious suggestion that the Hindus would be all right if they would sacrifice the Sikhs who would never be tolerated in Pakistan. I can never be a party to any such fratricidal bargain. There can be no rest for this unhappy land unless every Hindu and Sikh returns with honour and in safety to West Punjab and every Muslim refugee to the Union, barring of course those who do not choose to do so for reasons of their own. The sin of mass exchange of population must be washed out if we are to live as peaceful and helpful neighbours.

I must not be asked to recount the evil deeds of Pakistan. The recounting won't help either the Hindu or the Sikh sufferers. Pakistan has to bear the burden of its sins, which I know are terrible enough. It should be enough for everybody to know my opinion (in so far as it has any value) that the beginning was made by the Muslim League long before the 15th of August. Nor am I able to say that they turned over a new leaf on the 15th of August last. This statement of my opinion can't help you. What is of moment is that we of the Union copied the sins and thus became fellow-sinners. Odds became even. Shall we now awake from the trance, repent and change or must we fall?

Harijan, 7-12-1947



60. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

NEW DELHI,

November 25, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

Today I want to tell you something about the refugees from Pakistan. But the difficulty is whether they should be called refugees. Some persons met me yesterday and asked me why I was referring to them as refugees. In a way they are right because those who seek shelter are known as sharanarthi—refugees. They said they had been driven here by their troubles, but why should they seek anybody's protection here, especially since they have come to India and India belongs to everyone? I think of Pakistan as also included in India. But if it is not part of India today and India is divided into two parts, the Indian Union belongs and should belong to everybody. So, when they come over here, they do so as a matter of right. From this point of view those persons' remark appeared right to me. When a person is facing hardships in a place and escapes from that place and comes and takes shelter on the lap of his mother, shall we call him a refugee or a person who has come as a matter of right? I told them that they must admit that I had no ill feeling in my heart which would make me use harsh words. In fact, we have been such slaves of the English language that we cannot free ourselves from that slavish mentality. Hence the word refugee, and it could mean only one thing, as popularized by the Press, namely, sharanarthi or nirashrit. Then those people remarked that there were many other words in English. Why should they not be called 'sufferers'. I know English sufficiently well. So, how could I call them sufferers? Then, what should I call them? I thought they may be called dukhi because they are disconsolate. But in a way, we are all full of sorrow in this life. As a matter of fact those who have come here in millions leaving their homes and property are in great misery. I would therefore like to talk about them today.

Three types of people came to see me today. One type I would leave out altogether. The person had a big joint family in Lahore. He used to run some hotels, etc., and all his houses and property were left behind and he came here with his wife and children. He did not bring all the family members here. He narrated everything to me and requested me to find some accommodation for him. I told him that I had no authority, and even if I had, I would not fix any accommodation for him. As it was, there was a housing shortage in Delhi and the local people themselves were in great



trouble; the Government requisitioned their houses. When an officer or a diplomat arrived, he could not be put up in a tent. Hence, the Government acquired some houses and made the allotment for the purpose. If the original occupants protested and asked where they could go, they were asked to go anywhere. The Government, of course, did not go to that extent, but it could go, and many people would have received notices to vacate their houses. Under these conditions, how could these millions of suffering people be provided accommodation? He told me that he had come here after losing seventeen members [of his family]. I told him that at least he had seventeen members in his family. There were some families where there was no one apart from a man and a woman. I told him that if he believed that he belonged to the whole of India, even after the loss of the seventeen members who were dead and gone, the rest of India was there for him. Well, this is just philosophizing, so let us leave it here. Then I told him that he should go and live in the camps. All types of people were living there and there was nothing wrong about it. He said that he was no beggar to live on charity. I assured him he certainly was not one and if I were in charge of the refugee camps, I would not give food to charity. I would tell them that they were able-bodied and should work and maintain themselves and weave their own cloth. I would of course tell them to cover themselves during the night and protect themselves against the dew. But they needed no covering during the day. The sky was clear and they should take warmth from the heat of the sun. I did not stay inside during the day. I enjoyed the sun outside. But he said that he could not do that. He had young children with him and he needed a house to live in. I asked him if he was the only person having children. I found in every camp I visited mothers with their children. Some women were pregnant and gave birth to their children right there in the camps. What was his objection then to living in a refugee camp? I said he should eat what other refugees were eating and work as others did; he was strong and sturdy and might as well run a hotel or something. Why then should he not do something which might bring relief to others?

He asked me: “Why should the Muslims living here not vacate their houses and go away? Why are they still here?” I was deeply pained to hear this. In the first place the Muslims are already running away in panic and even from among those who have stayed back some are being slaughtered daily. Everyone goes and tells them: “Go away, we want to live in your houses.” If everybody exercises authority, who will be the subjects and to whom would the country belong? Everybody cannot wield authority. Nowhere in the world things happen like this. Of course, it is said that among



the savages there is no leader. But even bandits have a leader. In the case of Ali Baba and the forty thieves there was at least one leader. Thus there is no place in the world where all would be leaders or there would be no leader at all. We, however, do not know how to wield power and how to rule ourselves. That is the reason why we are in trouble today. It is deplorable that you should have designs on the houses of the Muslims who have fled in panic or have been killed or arrested by the police. It does not benefit you. If at all, you can say that to me because the house in which I stay is like a palace. You can ask me to leave this place and go and live in a camp. You can say that it would make no difference to me, for I have no wife, no sons, no daughters, that I have gathered these girls from somewhere and call them my daughters, that I should go to the camps and regard all the girls there as my daughters. I would listen to you if you said that to me. I would certainly feel amused, for, even if I ran away, would you stay here? This house belongs to someone else. It is not mine. Of course the owner of this house has made me the owner and insisted that I should keep or prevent anyone from staying here as I please. How can the Muslims leave their houses? Only Gandhi is in a position to do that. If he is removed from here and dumped somewhere no one is going to leave him unattended. Somebody would give him milk, fruits, dates and somehow his things would be managed. He is not going to remain unclothed. For even clothes would be provided for him. When I talked like this to that gentleman he felt ashamed.

Then some Sikh gentlemen came to me. They said they were not like the Sikhs here. The surprising thing was that they did not carry kirpans. I did not ask them the reason. However, they did wear metal wristlets on their wrists and I think they also had beards. They told me they were in great distress. They belonged to the Hazara district where they owned and tilled land. They were ready to live by farming if they were provided land and implements. I was touched by what they said and felt they were right. I asked them why they did not go to East Punjab. They informed me that the East Punjab Government could accommodate only people coming from West Punjab. They were told that the Government could not accommodate people coming from every place. Since they belonged to the Frontier Province they were asked to approach the Union Government.

Even though the Central Government does not have land, it would be nice if it could get land for these people. The Government should arrange to get oxen, ploughs, seeds, etc for them. I do not know if there is sufficient land in the province of Delhi.



But those who want to use the plough should be settled somewhere. Had I been in charge of the Government, I would have set up a separate camp for them, where they could produce their own requirements of food. If that is not possible, let the Government give them a loan to meet the expenses of these things. These people say that they do not have any money now, but they are industrious and if they could get facilities they would produce everything and would not sit idle. It seems to me that the country is losing much because such farmers are just sitting idle in so many places. They are our brothers and we must do something for them. I do not know whom I should approach in the Government. But through you I want to make it known to the Government that it is our duty to help such people. They ask me where they could go and stay and how they could eat. I would say that there should be a separate camp for them. But till that is arranged they should live and manage their things in the camps that are already there. If they cannot be given any place here, any vacant place anywhere in India is as good. They do not insist on being accommodated only here. They do not even say that they should be allotted any Muslim house. They say that they do not want to make others pass through the hardships they have known. They say they are poor people. They are strong enough but their strength is not for intimidating others. They want to live in whatever way they can with fear of God in their hearts. I told them that their trouble was only a passing phase. They wondered how that could be—just as somebody here wonders—how it could happen that the people who have come from Pakistan would go back there and the Muslims who have run away to Pakistan would return here, as I have been saying. I told them that it would happen, if not today, then tomorrow. But the condition is that we on our side should become good. Let us convince ourselves that there is none who is our enemy. Even the Muslims are not our enemies. Some people say that even here the Muslims are fifth-columnists. How could the poor things be fifth columnists? Nobody can harass us here and if anyone dares to do so, God will see to him or our Government will put him down. If we come to our senses here today, everything will be well tomorrow; I too will be free. Today I am very much disturbed. My life has become a burden to me. I wonder why I am still here. I could become strong if Delhi were restored to sanity, and then I would rush to West Punjab and tell the Muslims who have gone away from here that I have prepared the ground for them and they could come back any time they wanted and live wherever they chose. Such an occasion is bound to come some time, for how long can crores remain enemies of each other? It is not possible to kill or drive away 350 to 400 million Muslims who are here in India. One cannot even dream of it



and I do not want to entertain any such dream. But today I have become a sort of burden. There was a time when my word was law. But it is no longer so. Should I run away in that case? Whether I live or die, those who are living in misery will certainly return to their homes with honour and respect, not in order to pick up a fight with anyone but to meet their own brethren. Similarly, the Muslims should come back here. That is the only thing that can keep us alive and in no other way can we survive.

[From Hindi], Prarthana Pravachan—II, pp. 117-22



61. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

November 26, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

A gentleman has written a letter to me. It is accompanied with a cutting from a Bombay newspaper. It is stated in that cutting that Gandhi is only carrying on propaganda for the Congress, but people are not interested in hearing it. If the Congress uses the radio, etc., like this for its own propaganda, it is bound to bring about dictatorship in the end. It is absolutely incorrect to say that I sing praises of the Congress. I do not sing anybody's praises and, if I do, I sing the praises of the whole world. The cutting also says that the talk of non-violence is just for show, the real purpose being self-glorification by the Government. But I would say that no government which indulges in self-glorification can survive. And I only want to serve dharma. I speak to you only about things related to dharma. Maybe, some people are not interested in hearing what I say. But there are others who write to tell me that they feel greatly encouraged by what I say. Nobody forces people to listen to me against their wishes. If your mind is somewhere else, you are free to leave this place without listening to what I say. If you leave me alone, I would neither have the prayer here, nor deliver the speeches. I am not particular about speaking on the radio. I do not like it. Even here I do not come with a prepared speech.

Many of our women are in Pakistan. They are being molested. Those unfortunate women are made to feel ashamed. In my view, they have no reason to feel ashamed. It would be gross injustice if any woman is considered worthless by society and abandoned by her brothers, parents, and husband because she had been abducted by the Muslims. It is my belief that any woman who has the purity of Sita cannot be touched by anyone. But where can we find women like Sita these days? And not all women can be like Sita. Should we show contempt for the woman who had been forcibly abducted and tyrannized? She is not a woman of loose character. My daughter or wife too could be abducted and raped. But I would not hate her for that reason. Many such women had approached me in Noakhali. Many Muslim women also came. We have all become goondas. I consoled those women. It is the men who commit rape that should feel ashamed, not these poor women.

A gentleman (Secretary of a Provincial Congress Committee, who was a farmer) remarks that supposing controls are removed and people start producing food for themselves



in the villages and villagers start helping in harvesting the crops, etc., the prices will come down, but the prices will still rise if the farmers have to hire paid labour. It was customary at one time for one farmer to invite other farmers to help in harvesting and threshing and thus take the grains to the house. That practice is now forgotten, but should be revived. Nothing can be accomplished single-handed. That friend also suggests that at least one of the Ministers should be a peasant. Unfortunately, none of our Ministers is a peasant. The Sardar is a peasant by birth and has some knowledge of agriculture, but he is a barrister by profession. Jawaharlal is a scholar and a great writer, but what does he know about farming? More than 80 per cent of our population are peasants. In a true democracy, there should be the rule of peasants in our country. They need not become barristers. They should know how to be good farmers, how to increase their produce and keep the soil fertile. If we had such peasants, I would ask Jawaharlal to be their secretary. Our peasant ministers would stay not in a palace but in a mud-house, and would toil on the land throughout the day. Then alone can there be a true peasant rule.

[From Hindi], Prarthana Pravachan—II, pp. 123-4



62. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

November 27, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

You would have perhaps seen [the report] or you would see, for you could not have yet seen, that I had called on the Governor-General (Who had resumed office on November 27 on his return from England). Any time now it will be in the newspapers. Subsequently I called on Liaquat Ali also. I got an opportunity to visit both of them. We talked at length and they are working on something. I found that Liaquat Ali was not only ill but also confined to bed. He was having pain in the chest and palpitations. He is better now, but has gone very weak. He is staying at the Viceregal Lodge, hence I went and looked him up. He is the Prime Minister of Pakistan as Jawaharlal is the Prime Minister of India. Thus he and the Finance Minister (3 Ghulam Mohammed) of Pakistan, whose name I have forgotten, Sardar Patel and two others met and they have arrived at some decision. I cannot give the full report. If it is carried out it is possible that we might to some extent come out of our present confusion and hardships. But what happens or does not happen is in the hands of God. Man, after all, can only try. You must have read in the papers that Sheikh Abdullah has also come here. The Kashmiris refer to him as Sher-e-Kashmir. And so he is. He has done a lot of work; but the remarkable thing is that he has won over all the Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs. There Muslims are in a majority, and the Hindus and the Sikhs are just a handful. Nonetheless, he carries them all with him. He does nothing that would keep them discontented. Then we saw that while coming here he also went to Jammu. There have been considerable excesses by the Hindus there. This has not been fully reported in the newspapers. The Maharaja and his new Premier (Mehrchand Mahajan, Judge of the Punjab High Court, was appointed Prime Minister of Jammu and Kashmir in November) also went there. I asked Sheikh Abdullah jokingly if there were two Premiers. He said he also was not aware of it but this much he could say, that he was looking after the affairs of the Government there, whether there were one or two Prime Ministers. So he too went to Jammu. I do not know if what happened in Jammu was at the instance of the Maharaja or his new Premier. But those things happened there and it is a matter of great shame for us. Still Sheikh Abdullah did not lose his balance and the Hindus in Jammu fully supported him. Where then was the need to tell him anything? But he has still to convince Kashmir and the entire India that the only way for Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs is to live together in amity and to trust one another. Then alone can Kashmir and India live together. His



attempts are no doubt in that direction, but there is one obstruction. It is a mountain region which is at a height of 10,000 if not 14,000 feet. It snows heavily there. That is why movement from one place to another is not very easy. The movement would be easy only through Pakistan. But who could say that Pakistan would allow the movement? Apart from that, fighting is already going on with the Afridi invaders who may well be said to belong to Pakistan. Under these circumstances, how can the Kashmiris come via Pakistan? The Government of the Indian Union has already sent help to them and they can have a straight road only through India. There is not much trade in Kashmir, but the people of Kashmir are industrious and skilled in handicrafts. Kashmir is a huge fruit garden. But who would bring all those things from there and how? Everything cannot be brought by air. And how can those vendors travel by air? That is not possible. So, the only way is through Pathankot in East Punjab. It is a small road but at least there is one. But the Hindus of East Punjab have become so bad that no Muslim can cross that road. The Sheikh says that that is the greatest danger. He is a very big man but he says that even for him it is difficult to pass through that way. Not only the police guards but even ordinary people try to enquire from anyone passing that way who he is and would like to lift his turban to see if he wears a tuft and do similar things. If he happens to be a Hindu, or a Sikh, well and good, but if he is a Muslim then he is doomed. Such is the situation prevailing there.

So the Governor-General and these four have met. It would be good if they are able to do something. And they have done some little bit. But what is the use of their doing anything? If the people themselves are caught in a frenzy, then nothing can be done. I would tell the people of East Punjab that enough damage had been done, and now let us forget everything. Or, would things always be like this? I would say that that road should be absolutely clear. The Government also should fully carry out its responsibility. If the Government is not able to do this, what is the use of our having sent the army by air? Will it help in carrying on trade in Kashmir? If not, is the Indian Union going to feed the Kashmiris? That is not possible. If today our Government has come to possess millions of rupees, would it go on squandering that money? I hear that every officer in the Government is going to have a secretary. I just do not know what he would do or what monthly salary he would get. If we go on squandering money at this rate, we will perish in no time. Ours is not a land of millionaires. It is a poor country where people earn even a few copper coins with great difficulty. There are only a handful of millionaires or businessmen. And how much money do even these people have? If it is squandered like this, it will all be spent in no time. Then



there is the whole country to be looked after. We cannot waste money like that. So the Government will have to see how that road can be made safe so that anybody can pass on safely. Kashmiris make beautiful clothes which can be brought by that road. Shawls and other handicrafts can also be brought. So also the Kashmir dry fruits. Today you can get a Kashmir apple with great difficulty. Kashmir has acceded to the Indian Union, but how long can it remain with India in this way? If Kashmir does not find a safe thoroughfare, I do not know what would happen. Now, after mentioning the third point, I will wind up for the day.

I have just received copies of the Dawn and the Pakistan Times. Both these are prominent dailies of Pakistan. When something appears in the Dawn or the Pakistan Times we cannot dismiss it. That way the people of Pakistan can dismiss the reports in The Hindustan Times or the Bombay Chronicle, can't they? So this is a useless argument. I think the Dawn and the Pakistan Times are also good papers which are read by Muslims and run by leading Muslims. They write about the Muslims of Kathiawar in their papers. When the Sardar went to Junagadh I was happy to see that even the Muslims had welcomed him there. They said it was good he went there because they were in great trouble. When the Princes and the people of Kathiawar are all on one side, how long could Junagadh remain apart? Hence, I was happy that the whole problem was solved without any violence. They did not remain strictly non-violent, but whatever violence they used was after great thought and consideration. I was very happy to know all that. But now I hear and even the Dawn expresses the view that the Muslims in Kathiawar cannot live in peace. I have received a telegram from a Muslim at the right moment. Kathiawar is a region where the Muslims used to live in peace and nobody ever disturbed them. There were good Muslims there and also rebellious Muslims. They did not quarrel with one another, but struggled for livelihood. Now, in that same Kathiawar such a situation has developed that they wonder if they can live there at all. In such a situation, should all Muslims in Kathiawar run away or should the Hindus slaughter them all? They are terribly harassed, and for me, this is unbearable because I was born in Kathiawar, and I know all the Princes and thousands of people there. Shamaldas Gandhi, who is like a son to me, has become all in all there. He has also formed a Provisional Government there. What is the use of that Provisional Government if, in spite of it, innocent Muslims are killed? When people thus take the law into their own hands, how can the Muslims feel safe there? I cannot say what will happen if this state of affairs spreads to all other places. I do not know if all those things actually happened there, but I have read the report in the Dawn and have also



received some telegrams. Later I asked some Hindus about it, and they said that there had been some cases of arson and loot, but they could not say if there were any cases of murder or abduction of Muslim women. But the Dawn reports that all the four things happened and that too on a wide scale. I had received several telegrams but only one telegram was shown to me and by mistake the others were not shown. Perhaps some fifty telegrams would have come to me from Muslims at different places. And they have a right to tell me that my son has become all-powerful there. But how can I take the responsibility for everything that my son may do? At the same time, how can I convince the world or the Muslims that way? What they write is true. But when could I have conveyed my feelings to my son? I read about it only today. Hence, through you I wish to convey not only to my son but to the whole of Kathiawar that if the Hindus have become so bad—they can be only Hindus because there are no Sikhs living there except perhaps some who might have settled there to earn their livelihood—then Kathiawar cannot remain undivided. We have taken Junagadh, no doubt, but we have done it in such a way that we are going to lose it — just as we won our freedom but to lose it. Then they remind me of what the Sardar had said in Junagadh. He had said that nobody would touch even a Muslim child provided he was loyal to Kathiawar, that is, the whole of India. He said he would see how anyone could even touch a young Muslim girl. He could say that because he is at once the Sardar and the Home Minister of India. He had a right to say that. But after his saying it, what has happened? It pains me to see that such things could happen in Kathiawar and people could become so mad. We have lost our dharma, our ability to work, and in this way we are going to lose our country. It was my duty to put all these things before you. These things are not reported in our newspapers. But I get all the news. It was of course my duty to make inquiries, but where do I have time for it? Hence, I have told you what I have heard. Even when I met Liaquat Ali I told him that I would like to ask him a question if he permitted. He agreed. Then I asked him if he was aware of what was happening in Kathiawar. He said he knew everything—that such things had happened and all the four things had taken place—but he could not say on what scale. He is the Prime Minister of Pakistan. That is why he openly told me everything, whereas I was talking with great restraint. Then I thought I would convey to you this evening how pained I am by all this.

Kathiawar is my home. When that very home is on fire, what chance do I have to say anything? What can I say to the residents of Delhi? Something or the other is always happening everywhere around me. How can I remain unmoved in such a



situation? No sensible human being can remain unmoved in such an atmosphere. This is my sad tale, rather, the sad tale of the whole of India, that I have placed before you.

[From Hindi], Prarthana Pravachan—II, pp. 125-31



63. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

November 28, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

You know that today is Guru Nanak's birthday. Someone had sent an invitation to me also but at that time I had told him that I should be excused. But today Baba Bachittar Singh came to me and insisted that I should go. He came to me at 10 o'clock and we had to go in an hour's time. I then decided that I should go. Although I have done nothing from my side, my Sikh friends are angry with me today. Of course I have tried to push a bitter pill down their throat. But that is how things go on in the world. The Baba insisted on my going there all the same. He said there must be thousands of Sikh men and women and—some of them must be really in distress—who are eager to hear me. I agreed and told him that he should take me with him at 11 o'clock. He came at 11 a.m. with Sheikh Abdullah. He was also to be taken there. I asked him how Sheikh Abdullah could come there since the Sikhs and the Muslims could not bear to look at one another. But he said that Sheikh Abdullah had done one great thing. He had kept the Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims united in Kashmir and created a situation in which they would wish to live and die together. So I thought that Sheikh Abdullah too should go with us, and we took him along. I was very glad about it. There were thousands of Sikh men and women. I spoke but little; but Sheikh Abdullah spoke fairly at length, and people heard him with attention. There was no trace of disapproval even in their eyes, then where was the question of their creating noise? After all, we had been invited there. And then the Sikhs are a brave community, so it all turned out well. I felt I should pass on this little information to you.

I have received a letter from Bengal. It is from the Muslim Chamber of Commerce. I cannot reply to that letter; but I have thought about it and also enquired from Ghanshyamdas if he knew anything about it. He told me that the Muslim Chamber of Commerce wants to have dealings with the Government and wants to correspond with it. But the Government belongs to everyone, whether he be Hindu, Muslim or Parsi. Then, how can the Muslims, Hindus, Parsis and the Englishmen have separate Chambers of Commerce? Hence the Government has refused to recognize it. That gentleman says in his letter that it is indeed strange that while the Marwari and the European Chambers of Commerce are allowed to exist, only the Muslim Chamber is not being granted the permission. I could appreciate his point and it pained



me. If the Government does not wish to have any dealings with the Muslim Chamber of Commerce, it cannot have anything to do with the Marwari Chamber of Commerce and should not have anything to do with the European Chamber of Commerce, either. All these existed till now and the European Chamber of Commerce came into being because Europeans were in power and since we were being ruled by them the Viceroy used to be its President. And since he had to go to Calcutta during Christmas, he used to deliver long speeches there. But now that practice cannot be continued. How can the Europeans, Muslims and Marwaris have separate Chambers of Commerce? There can be only one Indian Chamber of Commerce. If the Hindus, Muslims and Parsis start having their separate Chambers of Commerce, what is the use of India's independence? Especially the Europeans should yield now. They should not do anything by remaining in isolation. They should refuse to have any special privileges, and insist on having the same rights as others. That would become a great hallmark of India's independence. The European Chamber of Commerce used to invite the Viceroy every year. But, in my view, they cannot invite our Prime Minister or Deputy Prime Minister or even Lord Mountbatten. Lord Mountbatten can certainly go and meet them as a European. But the Chamber as such cannot invite him. I am a small man, but I have no doubt about my opinion. Similarly, the Marwari Chamber of Commerce cannot invite anybody from the Government. It can invite anyone as a Marwari, but not on behalf of the Chamber. They all exist because India exists. Even the Muslims cannot live here as a separate community. Let them live here as Indians. In the same manner, all Sikhs, Hindus and Europeans can live here only as Indians. They can all stay here as loyal citizens of India, and in no other capacity. Hence I thought that I should convey to them this important point. It is better that they hear my voice before they receive what I write from here. If the Muslims insist on having a separate existence politically and otherwise, then that wish cannot be granted. The Europeans can live here as Christians and practise the wonderful things in Christianity. This, after all, is their social or religious sphere. But as far as administration and politics are concerned, they must all be treated on an equal basis. Similarly, trade also belongs to everybody. If the Marwaris, Gujaratis, Punjabis want to have their exclusive shares, what would remain for India? We cannot carry on our work in this manner. I forgot to mention one thing, which I should not have forgotten. I had mentioned it at the meeting of the Sikhs. But here too there are Sikhs and also Hindus. And what applies to one also applies to the other. Then I would say that we must regard today as the New Year day for the Sikhs. Hence, from today, the Sikhs have a duty to consider all the rest as their



brethren. Guru Nanak taught no other thing. He even went to Mecca and has written quite a lot [about communal harmony]. There are many such references in the Guru Granthsaheb. What did Guru Govind do? Many Muslims were his disciples and he even killed some people to accommodate them and protect them. He never killed anyone just for the sake of saving a Sikh. He did wield the sword, but he had accepted certain restrictions for its use. Thus, the Muslims may have done anything, but we do not have to imitate them. Let us all remain good and do our duty. When I went to address the meeting of the Sikhs today, I was pained that I did not find a single Muslim on the road. What would be more shameful for us than the fact that not a single Muslim could be found in Chandni Chowk? I found the area crowded with men and unending rows of cars. But there was no Muslim among them. The only Muslim, Sheikh Abdullah, was seated next to me. How can we succeed in these circumstances?

A gentleman writes to me about the renovation of the Somnath temple. (1 Which was desecrated and destroyed by Mahmood Gazni during his invasion in 1025 A. D.) This needs money and the Provisional Government at Junagadh, formed by Shamaldas Gandhi, has sanctioned Rs. 50,000 for it. One lakh is promised from Jamnagar. When the Sardar came here I asked him whether even though he was in the Government, he would acquiesce in its giving as much money as it liked for Hinduism from its treasury. After all, we have formed the Government for all. It is a 'secular' government, that is, it is not a theocratic government, rather, it does not belong to any particular religion. Hence it cannot spend money on the basis of communities. For it, the only thing that matters is that all are Indians. Individuals can follow their own religions. I have my religion and you have yours to follow.

Another gentleman has written well in a note. He says that it would be gross adharma if either the Junagadh Government or the Union Government gives money for the renovation of the Somnath temple. I think he has made an absolutely correct point. I then asked the Sardar if that was hue. He said that that was not possible so long as he was alive. He said not a single pie could be taken out from the treasury of Junagadh for the renovation of the Somnath temple. If he was not going to do it, he said, what could poor Shamaldas do alone? There were enough Hindus who could donate money for the Somnath temple. If they became miserly and did not part with money, let the temple remain in its present state. There were already a lakh and a half rupees and Jamsaheb had already given a lakh. They would be able to manage for more.



I have learnt one more thing. You must have known that the Muslims in Pakistan have abducted our young girls. Attempts are being made and must be made to rescue them. Let us try to get back every abducted girl who is still alive there. If these girls have been raped, have they lost everything by it? At least, I do not think so. I had even talked about it yesterday. Coercion cannot make one change his religion. But I hear that there is some talk of making some payment to reclaim these girls. Some hoodlums come forward to bring back the girls if they are paid Rs. 1,000 per girl. Has this thing become a business then? If somebody kidnapped one of these three girls with me and then demanded at least a hundred if not a thousand rupees, I would tell him that he had better kill the girl. My daughter would return if God wished to save her. Why should he bargain with me for her? Not only did he abduct the girl but he also indulged in bullying. Having abandoned his own religion he had come to bully me because she was my daughter. I would refuse to give him even a cowrie. Similarly no parent should make such bargains for his daughter. They must think that their daughters are with God and God is everywhere. If a girl loses her husband, where would she go? It is of course a different matter if the girl wants to come over from there and we give her the fare if she does not have it. But if a hoodlum comes and demands ransom money, his demand just cannot be accepted. I give such instances from there and also from here, because on our side too we have done such things and abducted Muslim girls. Would our Government indulge in such meanness? Should the East Punjab Government or the Union Government ask Jinnah Saheb to pay one lakh rupees for the return of Muslim girls in its custody? I would not give a single cowrie to the Government. How could it demand money as a reward for such abominable deeds? The Government should admit its mistake, make a solemn promise never to repeat it and return the girl along with compensation. We are not going to achieve anything if we ourselves do not become pure and brave.

I had discussed Kathiawar yesterday. I told you whatever I had read in the Pakistani newspapers and subsequently heard from some Hindus. But today I consulted the Sardar when he came to me. I told him that when he went there he had made big speeches assuring that no one would touch a single Muslim boy or girl there, but then I heard that Muslims were being looted and beaten up, their property was burnt and their young girls kidnapped. He said that as far as he was aware, certainly not a single Muslim was killed nor a single Muslim house looted or burnt. All these things happened there in the chaos prevailing before he visited the place. There were some cases of looting and probably one house was burnt. But as for killing and



abducting, these two things did not take place there even then. An agent of the central Government or some Commissioner was always present there. He had been ordered to see that such things were not allowed. He had been instructed to have perfect bandobast so that nobody even touched any Muslim, let alone robbing or killing. Subsequently, no such thing happened. I asked the Sardar if I could mention the thing in the prayer meeting in the evening. He said I could certainly do so. He said that if something had happened there, he would have pursued the matter. He also said that the Hindu Congressmen there at great risk to their lives saved the Muslims and their property. No hooliganism could persist there. The Sardar said that as long as he was there and was in charge of the Home Department, he would not allow such a thing to happen. I was very happy to hear all that and asked his permission to refer to it in public. He said that I could gladly do so and also mention his name. I was so happy that yesterday I had talked about it and today itself I got this information.

[From Hindi] Prarthana Pravachan—II, pp. 131-8



64. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

NEW DELHI,

November 29, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

I told you yesterday that it was a day of momentous importance for the Sikhs. It should hold the same importance for us too. If they have truly started a new life and desire to follow the principles laid down by Guru Nanak for all of us, then Delhi should not be in the grip of the things that it is in at present.

I have read in the newspapers and also heard otherwise that a large number of people in Delhi are given to drinking. We already know the things people can do under the influence of alcohol. Now I am told that drinking has become a difficult problem and has spread over the entire city, so much so that it has become extremely difficult to control it. If a new chapter has started from yesterday liquor consumption should become even less than before. Alcohol can only make us mad. Why then be a slave to it? How can I tell you everything? All kinds of things are brought to my notice.

This is one thing. As for the other, I am told that the mosques which we had damaged are still in that state, and the mosques which were turned into temples are closed since the police or the military guards them. But even this hurts me. For how can such a thing be allowed if we have opened a new chapter from yesterday? The Sikhs could not have converted the mosques into temples. The Sikhs are a great community, and, if they decide to remain pure from today and do only pure deeds I have no doubt that it is bound to influence the Hindus. Then the Sikhs would become propagators of truth and justice. This would become their profession, i. e., to stand for peace and nothing but peace everywhere. If this happens, the very face of the country would change. Hence, those who have converted the mosques into temples should promptly remove the idols from there, and restore the mosques. In that event, what need would there be for the police or the military guarding those places? When all people become good, there need be no police.

The third thing is that a large number of our girls have been carried away to Pakistan. We do not know where they have been taken. I had said yesterday that we should not give even a cowrie to get back the abducted girls. Those who have committed the crime of abducting our girls should restore them to us, and also do



penance at the same time. It would not do to give any money to claim the girls back. But there is a very alarming report. It is reported that in the East Punjab we are ill-treating the Muslim girls, whom we have forcibly kept. I just cannot understand how we could have stooped so low. I must admit that I cannot bear to see this. We should regard those girls as our mothers or daughters. Those Muslim girls are like my own daughters. How can I indulge in pleasures, be alive and eat and drink while somebody ill-treats my daughters? I have a feeling that there is some exaggeration in this report. But on that ground it should not be disregarded. And, if there is some exaggeration it is only for good, because it would then make us think how low a man could stoop. This is something which we would shudder to think. We have opened a new chapter from yesterday, for, if the Sikhs have done so, the Hindus and the Muslims have done it too. Let us forget about the Muslims as we have made them helpless in the Indian Union. But the Hindus and the Sikhs are not helpless. And so, they must think about what they should do. True, we are not indulging in such acts here. But when someone commits a crime anywhere I feel I am the culprit. You too should feel the same. If I were to commit any crime you should also think that you too were guilty of it. Let us all merge in each other like drops of ocean. If the drops of ocean remain apart they would dry up. But when they mingle together in the ocean they can carry huge ships across their expanse. As with the ocean so with us. After all we also are an ocean of human beings. If one person commits a crime, it amounts to all of us committing it. Then it ceases to be a crime. We must all become alert. That is why I talked about these things. But now I would like to come to the subject of controls.

Control on sugar has been removed. I hope and wish that controls on cloth and food would also be removed. But how would those controls go and what would be our duty after that? Since control on sugar has been removed, I would first talk about it. Now there are big sugar factories. But the owners of the factories should not consider themselves free to squeeze as much money from the people as they fancy. If they raise the price of sugar, people would be reduced to poverty. Fortunately the entire population of India does not consume sugar. People should consume gur (Jaggery) for there is no control on it. The villagers can easily make gur in their own homes, but they cannot make sugar. There are huge factories in India where millionaires employ workers to produce sugar. But gur can be produced wherever sugar-cane is grown. Moreover, gur is a very healthy thing to eat if it is clean. When I was a child my father used to take me or I used to go with his attendants to the villages where sugar-cane was grown. People of those villages used to give us fresh and clean gur to eat. Gur is a



sort of food which sugar can never be. So, the poor people should only eat gur. But today, some of them have started taking tea and in their tea they put sugar rather than gur. I would like to tell them that they should put gur in their tea; but would they listen to me? And when the price of sugar goes up, they think it would be better to have control on sugar so that they could have it cheaper. Under these circumstances, it is the supreme duty of the sugar merchants and factory-owners to have a mutual arrangement so that the entire country knows that with the freedom we have won we would earn only clean money. We would not cheat or deceive people and would root out all unclean and corrupt practices. If that does not happen, I would be blamed because I have worked quite a bit for the removal of controls, and am still working for it. If the sugar merchants and factory-owners increase their margin of profit, the price of sugar is bound to rise. If they take five per cent profit, it can be called honest earning. But it cannot be called honest earning if they pocket 10 or 20 per cent profit. Five per cent is more than sufficient and they should not take more than that. And, then, other controls would automatically go. Let not the Government get a chance to say that controls were removed because we wanted them to be removed and ask how the poor are now going to survive when they do not get sugar at all. That should not be the case. The factory-owners should become honest and form a committee to fix a uniform price of sugar. No factory-owner should charge more than that price. At the same time, the farmers who grow sugar-cane should not get less than their due. If the price rises because the cultivators are given more, then it becomes a matter of honest earning. They should maintain proper accounts and make a public announcement of what they pay to the farmers now as against what they were paid earlier, that the amount goes straight into the pockets of the cultivators and no middleman could swallow it and that as against the ten or twenty per cent they used to take, they are not taking even five and a quarter percent now. Supposing the factory-owners do not take more than five per cent but if the middlemen charge higher prices, consumers of sugar will be really doomed. In that case, the factory-owners should sell sugar directly to the consumers. I have no doubt that things would run smoothly under such an arrangement.

A gentleman writes to say that the train fares for third-class travellers have been increased, though the increase is less compared to that of the first and second classes, but he asks, and rightly, why the third-class fares had to be raised even by this much. Granted that our aims of progress are high and we require more funds to achieve them. Then, if need be, we can increase the levy on tobacco and many other imported



as well as indigenously produced non-essential items. It may serve our purpose to some extent. The men in power in the Government ought to consider and examine the feasibility of this proposition. But the point certainly needs to be understood, and the Government should also know that I have got people who give such useful suggestions. They are not unintelligent people. Rather, they are very sensible. If today we have millions of rupees with us, it does not mean that we should squander away everything. We should spend even small amounts, out of those millions, after careful consideration. And it is enough for me if these small amounts thus spent benefit the poor villagers of India. Out of the crores of rupees drawn from our villages, how much are we able to return to them? A true Panchayati Raj or democracy has got to draw its resources from the people but, in return, they should benefit the people tenfold. For instance, if I take money from the people for education, I should give such education to their children and have such an estimate of expenditure that they should get back their money tenfold. For example, if I start sanitation work in the villages and build roads for the village people, they would know that the money they give is being used for their own benefit. As a result, we would not be as crazy about our military as we are now. Then we would decide to spend as little as possible on the army and as much as possible on the general public. In such a situation, people themselves become the army and start acquiring knowledge of military affairs. When they are thus able to defend themselves and their neighbours, the defence of India is automatically ensured. As it is no one can have designs on India.

But right now, even though the British have gone, the atmosphere of the British rule has not yet gone. Let us change that atmosphere. The British used to spend extravagantly and the people did not get any return from such expenditure. But now the people should get back everything they give. Then it would be well for the country. This is all I would like to say today.

[From Hindi], Prarthana Pravachan—II, pp. 138-43



65. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

November 30, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

Yesterday I wanted to mention one point; but since I had to talk about many other things, it was left out. You must have seen that the girls sit on the floor and they feel cold. I had told them that we have plenty of papers and newspapers which we have read already and these could be used for sitting on. But it is good that a friend has spread a sheet today. In a way it is good to be unconcerned. Why should we be so delicate that we feel cold by sitting on the floor? Even if we have to sit on grass, if we can have a piece of paper and if it does not get wet, then we would not feel cold. If this does not serve the purpose, then we have our age-old custom of carrying our own *asana* (A small mat) wherever we go and spreading it whenever we have to sit. Today we have forgotten that practice and given ourselves to comfortable living. I suggest that we should forget about a piece of paper or newspaper, take one if you want and if it is thick, but the best thing would be an asana of wool or jute or even cloth or hay. All you have to do is to spread it wherever you want to sit and tuck it under your arm when you have to go. Since I am feeling cold, everybody must be feeling the same. Moreover, doctors also say that we should not sit on wet ground or where it is cold. If men wearing dhotis and women wearing salwars or skirts use thick cloth as undergarments, they can serve as *asans*. But the women too have become very delicate and so their clothes must be soft. How can they wear thick clothes? Their undergarments have to be soft. Hence, they cannot protect them against this cold.

I have received many telegrams from Kathiawar. I have already told you (Vide “Speech at Prayer Meeting”, 27-11-1947 and “Speech at Prayer Meeting”, 28-11-1947.) about what I heard and what subsequently appeared in the Pakistani newspapers. Those papers are read by thousands of people there. May be some ten thousand or so. I do not know how many people must be reading them. But nothing would be achieved if I started thinking whether those things had really happened. Hence it was good that I placed before you what I had read in those newspapers. I do not know if all those things are true. If they are true, they are a matter of great shame for Kathiawar. And if they are not true, it is a matter of shame for the newspapers. Thus it is a matter of shame for either side. I have also told you what the Sardar has to comment on the matter. He



came today also and told me that whatever reports came from there were not worth mentioning. They were highly exaggerated.

But the telegram I have received from Rajkot is worth noting. It is a fairly long telegram and I would like to mention it to you in brief. After all, I know the Muslims of Kathiawar. I do not know them individually, but I know the Khojas, Meenas, Vaghers and some Kumbis among the peasants, and Mahers. After all, I was born there and lived there for almost 17 years. In fact I lived there for full 17 years, because I did not go out to study anywhere. My father never sent me anywhere. I completed my studies there and attended college for a few months, and that too at Bhavnagar. Even for the examination I could not go beyond Ahmedabad. That was my condition. I saw everything that happened there and, later too, kept contact with the people by visiting them. So, the sender of that telegram says that I am greatly worried on their account, and, in turn, my worry has become their worry. He says it is true that some Hindus in Kathiawar had lost their balance, but is there any place where this has not happened. They resorted to violence and even harmed some Muslims. They destroyed their houses and even burnt them down. But, he says, the Congressmen did not let the situation go far. They were under the leadership of Dhebarbhai. I know him very well. He went forward to protect the Muslims and succeeded to a great extent. Not all Hindus were involved in those acts of loot and arson. Had that been the case, all Muslim houses in Rajkot would have been set ablaze, there would have been large-scale violence and some people would have been killed. But things did not reach that point. The Congressmen and others took every precaution. Dhebarbhai was abused and manhandled. Even though he is a big man and also a lawyer, when the mob gets excited all considerations of big and small are forgotten. They harassed him because he was trying to protect the Muslims. Some people who accompanied Dhebarbhai write, that, though some injury was caused, Dhebarbhai was saved by other people. The telegram also mentions help from the Thakore Saheb and the police. In that case, who is left to be suspected of creating the trouble? They say “the Hindu Mahasabha and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh— these organizations have certainly done some mischief—their aim was to drive out the Muslims at least from Rajkot. However they could not do so. But now we have nothing more to worry and there is no danger to the Muslims. So you also should not worry. We are watching the situation elsewhere too and we would send you another telegram.” I have received a telegram from a Muslim gentleman from the same place. He expresses his extreme gratitude to the Congressmen and others who tried their best to save the life and property of the



Muslims. But there is yet another telegram from Bombay also sent by a Muslim gentleman. He states that what I had said earlier about Kathiawar was correct but what I have been told later about it is not correct. That lots of things have happened there and are still happening.

I do not know whether I should believe the telegram from Bombay or the one from the other Muslim gentleman. But I doubt the truth about the telegram from Bombay because it has been sent from Bombay, while the other one has been sent by those who are right in Kathiawar. Moreover, the people of Kathiawar cannot deceive me. Where would they escape after deceiving me? Hence I feel that the telegram from Bombay gives an exaggerated version. The actual situation would be known to me in due course. For the present, let me at least put all this before you.

There is also a telegram from Bhavnagar. It is from the Maharaja of Bhavnagar. I know him too, because I have lived there for three or four months. So he felt concerned about me and wondered why I was so worried. He has said in the telegram that I need not worry. He says that they are all vigilant. The Hindus also are vigilant. They would not let any harm come to the Muslims and I should have no doubt at all about it

But there is a telegram from Junagadh sent by some Muslims. They say that I am being deceived, and I should set up a commission and inquire whether the Muslims are being harassed or not. Similar telegrams have also been sent to Jawaharlal, the Sardar and others. I would like to say that it is not possible to appoint a commission for anything and everything. Setting up a commission is no joke. Where is the need for having a commission even though some harm might have been done? As for Kathiawar, I am like a commission myself. If anything comes to my notice, I can check it. I can handle the Princes as well as the people of Kathiawar. I do not claim to succeed in everything I undertake or that they abide by everything I say. But is not Kathiawar the same as Bihar? If someone wants me to set up a commission in Bihar, do you think I would oblige? I am at their disposal myself. People there love me and listen to me. And so, it would not be proper to set up any commission there.

I have also received several letters from the Muslims in Rajkot. Many of them are friendly with the Hindus and also happy with the Congress. Then, who belongs to the Hindu Mahasabha and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh? I can have no enmity towards them. They think theirs is the only way of saving Hinduism. But I believe that Hinduism will not be saved in that manner. They believe in violent opposition to those



who commit an evil act. But I would ask how fighting an evil by another evil will help. We have got our own Government. Take it to task and demand an explanation as to why such things are happening. Moreover, our Government is vigilant and it is trying its best. And so I would like to tell the Hindu Mahasabha and also the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh—both are Hindu organizations and many influential and educated people are associated with them as in other organizations—that they cannot save Hinduism in this manner. Is it true that they have harassed the Muslims? If not, who has? The Congress has not harassed them, nor has either of the Governments done it. Who then are the other Hindus who did it? Today all the Hindus and Sikhs are to be blamed for this just as in Pakistan all the Muslims are to be blamed, and rightly so. That is why I would suggest that those who are innocent and yet are accused, should clear their names. The Muslims in Junagadh can get justice if they want. Why then should we set up a commission?

Having talked about the situation there, let me also talk about the situation here. The Sardar has made some arrangements and he is going to protect all the mosques we have here. You must have read the notice sent by him in the newspapers that the occupied premises of the mosques should be vacated in a week's time, otherwise they will be vacated with the help of the police. But I ask you what will he gain by sending the police? If some Hindus have installed an idol in some mosque—the idol may be of gold or silver or brass or earth or stone—but it is said, and I also believe, that so long as it has not been sanctified and not worshipped by pure hands, in my view it is not an idol but a mere piece of stone or gold. Such idols have been installed in the mosque at the corner of Connaught Place. In my view, there is no Hanuman in those idols. To me it is a mere piece of stone which has been shaped like Hanuman and to which some *sindoor* (1 Vermilion) has also been applied. In my view it is not worthy of worship. It can be worshipped only if it is legitimately installed and sanctified. But all this was not done. Hence it is the duty of those who have installed the idols to remove them from there at daybreak and then keep them wherever they choose. By thus installing idols in the mosques they are desecrating the mosques and also insulting the idols. As followers of Hinduism we are idol-worshippers, but worshipping any idol in this manner is not religion but the opposite of it. So, why should the Sardar send the police there? Those who are Hindus among you should become watchmen and remove the idols so installed. We should offer to repair the mosques which have been damaged. But the Sardar says that the Government would bear the expenses of the repairs of those mosques. Why should the Government do it? Is it not



because we are not doing it ourselves? The Government has to protect everybody. But it would be a matter of shame for us all—Sikhs and Hindus today. Of course I have not heard about any Sikh having installed the idols, for the Sikhs have only one idol or, say, the holy treatise, that is, the Granthsaheb. I have not known of any Sikh having kept the Granthsaheb in any mosque. Even if any of them has done so he has insulted the Granthsaheb. The Granthsaheb can be kept only in a gurudwara. Only the holy Sikhs keep it on a high pedestal after nicely decorating it. Somebody like me would wrap it in a nice khadi cloth. But today, even though people do not think in terms of swadeshi or foreign things we do manufacture beautiful woollens and silks by hand. If we spread such silk cloth and keep the Granthsaheb on it, it would be worthy of worship. And if any Sikh goes and keeps it in a mosque, he insults the Granthsaheb and then it cannot be worthy of worship.

A Muslim gentleman came to see me today. I could not make out what he wanted to say. But he was holding a copy of the Koran which was half burnt. Even that was sacred for him and so he had wrapped it in a very clean cloth. He opened the cloth and showed the burnt Koran to me. He did not say anything but looked at me with tearful eyes and then went away. He talked about a few things with Brajkishan, since I was busy with my work. Similarly, if any Muslim comes here and installs the Koran here and beats you and me up, I would say that he is insulting the Koran. The Koran does not ordain that people should be compelled to accept it.

That is why I very respectfully wish to tell the Hindu Mahasabha and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and others who wish to listen to me and also the Sikhs, that the Sikhs are great and if they turn good and become true followers of Guru Nanak, the Hindus would then automatically become good. I have great respect for the Sikhs in my heart but today, everybody, whether Hindu or Sikh, is going astray and India is being destroyed. Are we going to drag India into dust after raising her high? Are we going to destroy our religion, our achievements and our country? May God save us from all this.

[From Hindi], Prarthana Pravachan—II, pp. 144-50



66. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

(4 As Gandhiji was observing silence, his written speech was read out at the prayer meeting.)

NEW DELHI,

December 1, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

Many friends resent my use of ‘if’s in my statements. They think I should first of all make sure whether something is true or not. I feel that whenever I have made a tentative statement I have lost nothing thereby. It has only done good to the work I then had in hand.

The talk just now is about Kathiawar. Friends say that I gave currency to false allegations of atrocities on the Kathiawar Muslims. Most of the allegations were entirely unfounded. What little mischief might have occurred had been quickly brought under control. But if I have repeated those allegations with the conditional ‘if’ no harm has been done to truth. The Congress and the administrators of Kathiawar will gain to the extent that they take their stand on truth. Friends assert that though truth comes out in the end the harm is already done, for people who have no scruples about truth or falsehood dishonestly use my statements for their own purposes. I should therefore guard myself against untruth being propagated. But whenever people have resorted to such tactics they have failed and they were exposed as dishonest and false. If I mention the allegations subject to ‘if’s it should not perturb anyone. The only thing required is that those against whom the allegations are levelled should be wholly innocent.

Let us consider the other side of the matter. Take Kathiawar again for example. If I had not paid attention to the allegations contained in some major newspapers of Pakistan which even the Prime Minister of Pakistan had declared were true in substance, the Muslims would have taken them as gospel truth. But now the Muslims have come to doubt their veracity.

I would like friends in Kathiawar and elsewhere to learn from this the lesson that we will not let any trouble occur in our own house; we will welcome criticism even if that criticism should be bitter; we will become truthful and we will rectify any error we discover in ourselves. We must not delude ourselves with the belief that we can never make a mistake. Our bitterest critic is one who has some grudge, fancied or real,



against us. We shall correct him if we are patient with him and, whenever the occasion arises, show him his error, or correct our own when we are found to be in error. By doing so we shall never go wrong. No doubt a balance must be preserved. Discrimination is always required. One must never take notice of statements of a mischievous nature. I feel that after long experience I have learnt the art of discrimination.

Today the atmosphere is poisoned. Allegations are being hurled at each other by parties. To imagine in such a situation that we can make no mistakes would be folly. We do not have the good fortune today to be able to make such a claim. It will be enough if with necessary effort we succeed in eradicating the mischief and root it out. We can do so only if our eyes and ears are open to see and hear about our own shortcomings. Nature has so made us that we cannot see our own shortcomings. We can see only those of others. Wisdom requires that we should benefit from others seeing our shortcomings.

Yesterday, I was not able to deal fully with the long telegram from Junagadh, which I had received as I was about to leave for the prayer meeting, for I had only cursorily glanced through it. Today I have studied it fully. Those who had sent the wire state that the allegations to which had referred the other day were founded in truth. If this is so it is very bad for Kathiawar. If attempts have been made to exaggerate the allegations that our workers have admitted as true and which I have published, then those behind this wire have done harm to Pakistan. They invite me to go to Kathiawar and see things for myself. They ought to know that today I am not in a position to do that. They demand an inquiry commission but before that they must prepare their case. I grant that their purpose is not to bring a bad name to Junagadh or Kathiawar. They want the truth to be brought out and they want security for the life and property and honour of the minority community. They know, as everyone knows, that newspaper propaganda especially when it is not wholly based on truth can protect neither life nor property nor honour. To protect all these three things those sending the wire should adhere to truth and they should go and meet their Hindu friends. They know their friends amongst Hindus. They know also that though I am at some distance away from Kathiawar I am doing their work even from here. I have said this after full deliberation and now I am collecting all the facts. I have seen Sardar Patel. He says that to the extent that it lies within his power no communal riot will be permitted and anyone misbehaving with our Muslim brothers and sisters will be severely punished.



The Kathiawar workers, who are quite impartial, are trying to find out the truth for themselves and trying to alleviate the sufferings of the Kathiawar Muslims. They love Muslims as much as they love their own selves. Will the Muslims help them?

[From Hindi], Prarthana Pravachan—II, pp. 151-3



67. SPEECH AT PUBLIC MEETING

(The Gujarati version in Dilhiman Gandhiji has been collated with the report in The Hindustan Times.)

PANIPAT,

December 2, 1947

Gandhiji told a mass meeting mostly of refugees from West Punjab that he was not very happy on his second visit to Panipat. During his last visit (On November 10) he was assured by the non-Muslims of the locality that they would not let the Muslims go from Panipat. He was hurt to hear from Mr. Gopalaswami Ayyangar ((1882-1953); Prime Minister of Kashmir, 1937-43; Minister without Portfolio, Government of India, 1947-48; Leader of Indian Delegation to United Nations Security Council; Union Minister of Railways and Transport, and later of Defence) that arrangements were now complete for sending the Muslims to Pakistan. He hoped that he would hear about the Hindus persuading the Muslims not to go to Pakistan. Why did the Muslims of Panipat, who were previously not eager to go to Pakistan, now want to leave?

All the Muslims in the camp here want to go. I told them that they would get all the protection here. But one should depend on God's protection rather than on the protection of the army and the police. Supposing you are eating and death comes while food is in your mouth, no army or police, no doctors or drugs, will be of any use. If we could only stop to think how God holds in his own hand the string of death, the prevailing conflict between trust and distrust would end. If my brother has become mad and wants to kill me, does it mean that I should also go mad? To return evil for evil makes for the fall of both parties. No one can be forced to accept another's faith.

Referring to conversions, Gandhiji said that there had been conversions of Hindus and Sikhs in Pakistan. To repeat the same here to Muslims would be denial of civilization and did not speak of humanity. By these conversions people neither enriched their religion nor themselves. By such acts people degrade themselves and their country for which they had made much sacrifice.

No one had imagined that the freedom that came would be such a terrible thing. But that was the will of God. If we can pass the present test we shall have risen very high. Sjhariar asks, if India fails what will become of his country? The whole of Asia today has its eyes fixed on us. God has given us a jewel in the person of Jawaharlal.



The whole world likes him. We have a leader such as the Sardar. The two make an inseparable pair. Neither can do without the other. India has a name in the world because of Jawaharlal. Who otherwise would care about India? But Pandit Nehru will not be able to do his job without your cooperation. Let us not allow India's name to fall into disrepute.

To the refugees from West Punjab, Gandhiji said that he knew that they had encountered untold sufferings. It might also be a fact that the Muslims staying here might be having some property and enjoying themselves a bit. But, just because they had suffered, they should not deprive the Muslims of their property. He would not believe that all refugees were bad people.

There are 28,000 refugees in this camp. Not all of them can be good. If there are goonda elements among them you should pick them out and make of them good men by your love. They are all brothers here, so what need is there for the military? If there are two brothers in a family does it need any police force to guard them? Your salvation lies in learning to protect one another. You should go to your Muslim brothers and sisters and plead with them not to leave India. If you do not cast covetous eyes on their homes, I am sure Hinduism will live forever. We must forget what has happened. In this alone lies our good. You may listen to an experienced old man if you care, for today my voice is a voice in the wilderness. However I must say what I consider my duty to say. Today I do not have the wish or the zest to go on living. Time was when I wanted to live 125 years and bring about Ramarajya. But if I do not have your co-operation what can I do all by myself?

It was said, Gandhiji continued, that the Muslims had arms in their possession. There might be arms with the Hindus and Sikhs too. He said that all arms, whether they be with Hindus, Sikhs or Muslims, should be licensed.

Dilhiman Gandhiji—II, pp. 10-2, and The Hindustan Times, 3-12-1947



68. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

NEW DELHI,

December 2, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

I had told you I should be going to Panipat today. I had intended to be back by four o'clock. But there was so much work that I could not come before thirty-five minutes—at any rate thirty-three minutes past five. Then I heard the prayer. I have said that the prayer should begin whether I am present or not and we must be regular. Then I went and washed myself. Hence the delay, for which I apologize.

I had already hinted at the purpose of my visit to Panipat. I had been hoping and I continue to hope even now that by some means or other the Muslims of Panipat should be stopped from going [to Pakistan]. It will be good for us, good for the whole of India and because it will be good for India it will be good for Pakistan as well.

There are people living in distress there—the refugees who have come from Pakistan—and they must continue to live in distress as long as they do not return to their homes. Similarly the Muslims who have been forced to flee to Pakistan will be unhappy there. You should have no doubt about it.

It was good that I went there. It was my duty to do so. Dr. Gopichand Bhargava had come and so had Sardar Swaran Singh, the Home Minister. I had no idea that Dr. Gopichand was coming. Sardar Swaran Singh had of course sent word that if he should be needed he would come. I said there would be no need for him to come because whatever had to be done would have to be done by me. Nevertheless he came. East Punjab is after all his region and it was his right to come. Deshbandhu Gupta had sent a message that he was ailing and so would not be able to come. I had agreed, but since he belongs there he did come. It was good that all of them came. Then there was the Maulana whom we often see here. I then spoke to people. I spoke to the Muslims separately, though the two Ministers were present. (1 Vide "Talk with Muslim Delegation", 2-12-1947.) They thought that the Ministers should be there, for what was the good of my saying something which the Ministers would not know about and which I would not be able to enforce? The Muslims admitted that they had agreed in talks earlier not to go but that later the situation had worsened; that nothing had been done on the lines I had assured and they had felt harassed; their honour was not protected. When they



could not protect their lives, their property and their honour, how could they stay? They said they would put up with the destruction of their houses, they would put up with arson, they would put up even with loss of lives but they would protect their honour to the last. If they could do that they would stay. I said that he who loves mankind loves God. He has nothing to fear.

I then spoke to the refugees there. (Vide “Speech at Public Meeting”, 2-12-1947.) By the time I was done it was half past three. I had set out from here at 10.30 and reached there at about 11.30. My talks with the Muslims continued up to 3; there was so much to talk about. Then I spoke to the refugees. After me Dr. Gopichand Bhargava addressed them. But when Sardar Swaran Singh got up to speak there was pandemonium. People started shouting; not because they wanted to insult him but they could not contain themselves. They became angry that he dared to speak at all.

It was a large crowd. There must have been some twenty thousand people. The ground was filled to capacity. Roofs were covered with people. They heard me in silence. But when the others began, people stood up. It has become customary for us to vent to anger. They stood up and began to shout that the Muslims should be expelled. I told them that it would not be good to drive out the Muslims. They had their homes, and they should not be forced to leave; that forcing the Muslims to leave would undo all our efforts there. I was ready to resume my seat but Sardar Swaran Singh, being the Home Minister and also a brave man, would not be cowed down, he said this would not do. He tried to speak but nothing came of it. People continued their shouting and continued to stand. Then their representative, their leader came forward. He began with a bhajan in Punjabi. I had not known that he was a poet. He knew that Punjabis like bhajans. Then he admonished them in Punjabi and told them that he was their representative and they must listen to him, that shouting would achieve nothing. What would they gain by disturbing the meeting? It would only harm them. Peace was restored at last but it took some doing. People sat down and the proceedings were continued in Punjabi.

I cannot speak Punjabi but I understand it. I liked what [Sardar Swaran Singh] said. When we were with the Muslim leaders he had assured them that whatever might happen in Pakistan we would not become inhuman. He said that ours was a democratic Government and would not let such things happen here. If any Muslim girl had been kidnapped she would be restored by every means. Help would certainly be needed for they would not know where an abducted girl was. But if it was known she



would be brought back. The other thing they would do was about the Muslims who had been converted to Hinduism or Sikhism. They were still Muslims. Such conversion would not be accepted as lawful, for it was against morality. Similarly the Muslims who were still here would be protected whether or not Pakistan protected [the Hindus and Sikhs]. Thirdly, Sardar Swaran Singh said that the mosques would be protected. Of course, protection of life and property was a difficult matter. There was the police, the Government—they would do what they could, but if everyone took to plunder and pillage they could not be shot down. The Government was helpless. Our freedom was crippled and we had to confess our helplessness. They could certainly plead with people but they had to admit their helplessness. He was very persuasive. He pleaded with them saying that India's honour and dignity were in their hands, that the Government was theirs, for it was they who had elected the Ministers. And since the Government was there it would do its duty, do what it must and they must help. He explained all this. It took a long time. In the end there was peace at the meeting. Every time it happens that when people lose their temper on such occasions, they begin to understand things after a time when they calmly think over it. I saw this during the course of our struggle for freedom. There were many occasions when it looked as if the meeting would have to be terminated, but in the end they saw the point. Afterwards the representatives of the refugees came and followed me. I asked them to accompany me in the car. If I was not to do so, I would have been further delayed. I had to count every minute, for I wanted to reach here in time. I have forgone my siesta. When everyone is unhappy, how can I seek rest? I am certainly much more comfortable than they are. They tell me that the refugees there are in much distress. Of course something has been done. Things are certainly much better than I had seen them last. Some arrangements have been made. Some roofs have been put up. They certainly have tents to live in, but the food is not all that it should be. The Governor of East Punjab (C.L. Trivedi) also saw it and admitted that it should be improved. As to clothing it seems all the decent clothing is taken away by some people. What shall I say as to who does it? The result is that the refugees get only rags. This should not be so. They must get the things that are intended for them. People die too, which is only natural. Two people had died; there was no firewood to cremate them. A whole day was lost. I forget the name of the doctor in charge. He was not to be found anywhere. By then it was seven in the evening. Since no arrangement could be made for firewood, some people approached a relative of one of them and offered to raise a contribution of ten to fifteen rupees. But the relative who was a strong man refused to accept the



donation. He said that if there was no firewood he would bury the dead. Burial is not common among the Hindus and I was sorry that he had to do it.

I learnt afterwards that well-to-do refugees are able to get things but not the poor ones because the arrangements are not in the hands of senior officers. The workers were taken from among the people there and everything was done through them. If they are good, altruistic and dedicated to service things go well. But if they do not have the spirit of service it becomes difficult. I like to have everything in the open. Let us not resort to physical violence. It generates poison. We have an alternative method and that is to speak up frankly. It does not do to hide things. One must call a spade a spade. What is lost by accusing those who indulge in evil practices? If they are guilty the charge should be made. That is why I tell you that it is a bad practice. We are already unhappy. Hundreds of thousands of people have been uprooted from their homes and have come here. If we indulge in such practices it would be very bad. Today a small boy confronted me. He was wearing a sweater. He took it off and stood glaring at me as if he would eat me up. He was just a child. What could he do? “You say that you have come to protect us”, he said, “but my father has been killed. Get me my father back.” But his father was dead. How could I bring him back? The boy became angry. I can imagine that if I had been of his age and in his position perhaps, I would have done the same. I was not annoyed. I felt sorry for him.

We see such scenes today. The refugees say that all of them at any rate are not bad; that the management should be entrusted to some of them, for after all magistrates and others were there to supervise. Other people too had to be supervised. At least the distribution of blankets should be entrusted to them. Their children should get milk but the milk does not reach them. The staff appropriates it. Would it not be better to give them the milk for distribution rather than that the members of the committee should drink it up? Then some of them have been receiving letters from other refugees elsewhere. They ask them in the letters to tell the Mahatma to attend to them too. It is good I went there. I told them to be peaceful and to persuade the Muslims to stay on. I told them that it would be something unique for Panipat which has been the scene of so many battles.

There are 28,000 refugees living in the camp. I told them, “If more refugees join you what can it matter to you? It is enough for you if you get food to eat, clothes to wear and a roof or even a tent to live under. You can get nothing more than this wherever you may go. You can create many things out of these three things. You



should know what developments are taking place all over India, what problems are coming up and how we can solve them. The Government is there, but the Government cannot force you to do anything.”

Yesterday Jawaharlal said a beautiful thing. I happened to see it in the papers today; it is rare that I get a chance to read anything. Jawahar says that he does not like being called Prime Minister. When did he ever become Prime Minister? He would like it and it would be more appropriate to call him the first servant of the nation. If everyone became the first servant he would have to think of others all the twenty-four hours of the day. If the officers under Jawaharlal were to think so, our country would become a land of gold. We would have Ramarajya, the kingdom of God upon earth. Then our freedom would be complete. If after attaining freedom we continue to conduct ourselves in the manner we are doing now then that freedom will irk me. Is this the kind of freedom we are going to have? No, it cannot be.

[From Hindi], Courtesy: All India Radio. Also Prarthana Pravachan—II, pp. 154-9



69. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

NEW DELHI,

December 3, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

I receive many visitors. I do not relate to you everything they say. I do let you know if something is important enough. Today I had some visitors. It appeared they had had some business with the Prime Minister. They said the Prime Minister had earlier made a certain promise to them and that he was now going back on the promise. How was that, I asked. They said they had his letter. I asked them to show me the letter. After all I had no more power than they. I was not the Government. Yes, I was a servant, a friend of the Prime Minister, a co-worker, and so I would speak to him. But how was I to mention it to him? Then I reflected on the matter and I asked myself why this sort of thing happened,—people saying one thing and doing another. I have to bear the brunt of all this. I am sure that I have never deliberately deceived anyone. It is possible that, without understanding the implications, one may say something in all good faith without any dishonest motives. And yet a person may feel aggrieved thinking that he has been deceived. Often things are not fully understood and the result is breach of faith. But if a person deliberately breaks a promise it is a bad thing. This should not happen. The best thing is to keep quiet. Once we have put into words what we feel, we must act accordingly. Only then can we be said to be keeping our word. And now especially when we are free and run the Government in the name of the millions we must be very careful. We must show restraint, discretion and humility. We must not be arrogant. Only then can we take our work to a successful conclusion. No one then will be able to charge us with breach of faith. If we say that we shall distribute a certain thing free of cost and later say that we shall charge something even a little for it, then it is breach of faith. Today we have come to such a state that we do not value our word. We make a promise today and wriggle out of it the very next day. If I make an appointment with you for 4 o'clock tomorrow but at the appointed time go off to a dance, it is breach of faith. So I say that we have to be very careful. We must stick to our word, we must weigh our words before we utter them. We must not say anything on impulse. For instance we may say that there was rioting and later colour it and say that there was murder. This sort of thing cannot be hidden for long. The truth comes out in the end. So we must be careful.



A doctor from Sind has written to say that the Harijans left behind there are in a pitiable condition. (According to a telegram sent by Choithram Gidwani to B. R. Ambedkar, Harijans in Sind and Baluchistan were being prevented from migrating to India under the Essential Services Ordinance.) If only Harijans were left behind in Sind and caste Hindus went away, nothing but annihilation awaited them. The only condition for life there would be complete slavery and ultimate acceptance of Islam. This is a bad situation. Today the situation is such that if the Pakistan Government says something, the officials at its behest do not implement it. Of course the same thing is true of India. Jawaharlal and the Sardar say that they shall protect Muslims, they shall not allow even a single Muslim to be driven away to Pakistan, but it does not happen. They do not have people to enforce what they say. Their subordinates do not carry out their wishes and the people too do not pay any heed. Yesterday I told you that I had been to Panipat. All the Hindus and Sikhs who have arrived there are in a miserable plight. They were ill-treated in Pakistan and they had to flee. They came because they were oppressed. Otherwise what was the need for them to run away? Having themselves run away from oppression, does it behove them to force others into a similar situation? But this happens. How then can I complain to Pakistan? But I have to do so. The correspondent has written in detail. He says no Harijan wants to continue living in Sind. If they want to stay together at one place they are not left in peace. Forced labour is extracted from them. They are told to clean lavatories, do the sweeping and so on. A Bhangi should not be forced to clean lavatories today. If he can become a barrister, why should he be stopped? Why should we insist that his only work is to clean lavatories? They must be free to act according to their inclination. If they are told that they can stay only if they embrace Islam, what can they do and where can they go? You will have seen the long statement Jagjivan Ram ((b. 1908); President, All India Depressed Classes' League, 1936-46; Labour Minister in the Interim Government; later held important portfolios like Railways, Food and Agriculture and Defence in the Government of India) has issued. He says that Harijans must come away from Sind. If they want to come they should be given facilities to do so. So long as they are in Pakistan they must be allowed to go about their business unhampered; otherwise they should be allowed to leave. If this is not done it is going to leave a permanent sore spot on the Hindu and the Sikh minds. Although India and Pakistan are two countries, we cannot forget one another. We have to conduct ourselves as gentlemen. We must not hurt anyone. We must not force anyone to become a Muslim. We must not molest and abduct anyone's wife or daughter. Dr. Gopichand Bhargava and Sardar Swaran Singh also said yesterday that India could not



tolerate such things. Today the atmosphere has become so polluted that if a Muslim says that he has embraced Hinduism this should not be accepted as genuine. Harijans are non-Muslim. If they say that they have embraced Islam it is not to be accepted. It is only fear that makes them say so. All such conversions should be considered null and void.

Contradictory reports are coming from Kathiawar. Some reports say that the situation in Kathiawar is as bad as described. A telegram to that effect has come only today. Other reports are from the Congress sources and these say that such is not the case, that the Congress workers can never indulge in such things. The Hindu Mahasabha and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh say that they have never burnt anybody's house. Which reports am I to accept as true? Shall I believe the Congress, or the Muslims, or the Hindu Mahasabha and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh? It has become very difficult to get at the truth. If mistakes have been committed we must acknowledge them. If the Hindus have been in the wrong, if they have committed excesses, it must be admitted. But if this is not the case and if the Muslims exaggerate when they say that their properties were burnt, they were forced to become Hindus, that their daughters were abducted, we must proclaim it to the world that that was not the case. Similarly if the Hindu Mahasabha and the R.S.S. have not done anything wrong I must congratulate them. What the truth is I do not know, though I am trying to find out. I have written to people (1 Vide "Letter to Jayashankar Pandya", 2-12-1947 and "Letter to Shamaldas Gandhi", 3-12-1947.) I know there. I have also written to Muslims. I have asked them to give me all the details so that I may be able to see what shapes things are taking there and what the upshot is going to be.

Now about South Africa. You will have seen what Vijayalakshmi Pandit has said. She says we have been defeated because we have not been able to secure the required two-thirds of votes. (The Indian Resolution calling for a Round Table Conference on the treatment of Indians in South Africa failed to obtain the requisite two-third majority in the United Nations General Assembly, 31 having voted in favour, 19 against, with 6 abstentions and one country absent.) However, a number of people have been helpful and supported her stand. Besides, truth is on our side and in a way we have secured a victory. (Vijayalakshmi Pandit had said: "ours has been a moral victory of no small importance.") The Indians in South Africa should therefore not be disheartened. But there is something I have to say. Vijayalakshmi could not have said it because she represented the Government of India. You do not have a remedy but I have one which I had applied in South Africa. What is defeat or victory? The whites of South Africa and Smuts (Field Marshal Jan Christiaan Smuts, Prime Minister



of South Africa) may say that they do not want us there, that we must leave. They may deny us food and water as is happening to non-Muslims in Pakistan and to Muslims in India. They have driven away Hindus and Sikhs from Pakistan under threats. There are still a large number of Hindus and Sikhs in Bannu. What will happen to them I do not know. Meharchand Khanna (Ex-Minister for Finance in N.W.F.P.; Secretary of the Khudai Khidmatgar Parliamentary Party. He was sentenced to six months' rigorous imprisonment on November 27 and on being released on bail came to Delhi. He expressed grave concern about the safety of the 40,000 Hindus and Sikhs who were still in Peshawar, Mardan, Bannu, Dera Ismail Khan and Parachinar, awaiting evacuation as no refugee train was allowed to leave the N. W. F. P. since October 28. He was also concerned about the non-Muslim prisoners and under-trials in the Frontier jails.) has been to see me today. He says that in other places too there are people whose lives may or may not be saved. If they survive they will have to embrace Islam. But at Bannu the number is very large. What should they do? They are like prisoners. They cannot get out and if they stay on what are they to eat? They are in a sad plight. What can the Government do? It has its own problems. What I have to say here applies also to the Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs in South Africa. I must tell them that victory and defeat are of no consequence. 'You must say that you will live in South Africa with honour, that you will not leave. You did not go there because you wanted to. You were invited. You went as indentured labourers and afterwards you had children there. If it is a question of rights no one except the Negroes have a right to be there. The Boers do not have even as much right as you have'. There were delegations from all over the world at the U.N.O. Our country also had to send a delegation. We acted rightly. People assemble there to bring about justice, that they cannot or will not is another matter. We must continue our fight in South Africa, not with a sword but with soul-force. Even the little girl sitting beside me has soul-force, others too have it. The soldiers, too, have soul-force. The sword can be snatched away from us. We can be disarmed. Our arm can be cut off but no one can take away our soul. It is eternal. It is there today and it will remain tomorrow and the day after. The body is worthless without the soul. The body one day has to be disposed of. My wife died and I could not keep her with me. Mahadev (Mahadev Desai) died who was of so much help to me. But I could not keep him and his body had to be cremated. So I shall say that if the Indians in South Africa have self-respect which I think they have, if they have courage, they must say that even if they did not secure two-thirds of the votes at the U.N. they did secure a very large number. They must tell the whites of South Africa to let them stay in the country with honour. They must tell them that they intend to conduct themselves with dignity. They do not want government service. They do not expect help from the whites but they



must be allowed to breathe the air, drink the water and live on the land. After all they pay their way, earn their keep, wherever they want to stay. They do not claim the right to vote. If they want the vote they must have it in the same way as the whites have it; otherwise they will do without it. They will not carry on satyagraha for franchise but they must safeguard their dignity. They must have bread and they must have water and they must have land. Also their children must have education. They will understand if no grants are forthcoming for the purpose but the education for the children is their right and they have the right to fight for this. It is not a question of victory or defeat but of laying down one's life. They must do or die. There is no other recourse. If they want to live in this world in dignity they must do or die. Their duty is clear and admits no argument. This is what I have to say to the Indians of South Africa and to you. I have nothing else to offer.

[From Hindi] Courtesy: All India Radio. Also Prarthana Pravachan—II, pp. 160-5



70. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

NEW DELHI,

December 4, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

I talked to you yesterday about Kathiawar. Today I have a telegram from Shamaldas. Yesterday I had a telegram from Dhebarbhai too. Both say that the news I have been receiving had been highly exaggerated. So far as they know no women had been abducted and there was not a single case of murder. In fact after Sardar Patel went there nothing untoward happened. Before that there had been some little rioting and looting. Shamaldas was upset by my statements, and that was but natural. He has gone to Kathiawar from Bombay. He will make an investigation and let me know. I have been receiving telegrams also from the U. S. A., Iran and London repeating the charge that the Muslims in Kathiawar have been subjected to terrible atrocities. Truthful people should not indulge in this kind of propaganda. And what has Iran got to do with what happens in India? Shamaldas Gandhi says that he makes no distinction between Hindus and Muslims. I would like to help the Muslims who write to me provided they are on the path of truth. But if they give up truth and make a mountain out of a molehill and if they spread stories all over the world, that will be too much. I can understand wires coming from inside India but when wires come from abroad it pains me.

I have received a letter from a Muslim in Hoshangabad. It is a very good letter. Guru Nanak's birthday is an important day. Sikhs wherever they are celebrate it. At Hoshangabad also they celebrated it and invited the Muslims. They assured them that they were brothers and the Sikhs had no quarrel with them. Perhaps I told you once how at the Hoshangabad station a Muslim was on the point of being killed and the Sikhs had come to his rescue. So if on Guru Nanak's birthday the Sikhs really did what the correspondent describes, it is a great thing. If this example is followed everywhere the blot on us will be removed. I thought that the newspapers should give publicity to such happenings.

Another thing I want to talk to you about is the Chamber of Commerce. I have already hinted to you about the Marwari and European Chamber of Commerce. (Vide "Speech at Prayer Meeting", 28-11-1947.) If we can have a Marwari Vyapari Mandal why can we not have a Muslim Vyapari Mandal too? But the Marwari Vyapari Mandal people



say that it is for all and that others besides Marwaris are represented on it. I enquired as to how many Marwaris it had and how many Hindus, how many Sikhs, how many Europeans. The letters I have received from them are in English. They have sent a statement of their policy and their rules and their report— all in English as if I did not know Hindustani or Hindi. I confess that I do not know English as well as I know my own language. How can I disregard the language that I imbibed with my mother's milk and give more importance to English which I first started learning at the age of twelve? I asked if there were many Englishmen on that body. They must tell me what it is all about. If the name is Marwari Vyapari Mandal, then how can everyone join it? The Muslim Chamber of Commerce can similarly say that it represents everybody. It can have on it a Hindu or two. This sort of thing does not convince one.

The Prime Minister of Burma had been to see me. (Vide "TALK WITH BURMESE DELEGATION" NEW DELHI, December 4, 1947) He is full of humility. I told him that it was a very good thing that he had paid a visit to India. Our country was geographically large and its culture was no doubt ancient. But what was happening today—the mutual mistrust of Hindus and Muslims—was not something from which anyone could learn anything. Guru Nanak preached that the Sikhs should be friendly with both Muslims and Hindus. In fact there is no such distinction between Hindus and Sikhs. Tara Singh has said that one cannot separate Hindus and Sikhs. I would be very happy if we could conduct ourselves thus. The two religions are fundamentally one. Even Guru Nanak never said that he was not a Hindu nor did any other Guru. If we read the Granthsaheb we shall find that it is full of the teachings of the Vedas and Upanishads. The teachings of the Koran are similar. The same is true of the teachings of Guru Govind Singh. What he taught is also to be found in the Hindu scriptures. There is nothing wholly new. He has only emphasized certain things. I claim that they originate from the Vedas. It cannot be said that Sikhism, Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism are separate religions. All these four faiths and their offshoots are one. Hinduism is an ocean into which all the rivers run. It can absorb Islam and Christianity and all the other religions and only then can it become an ocean. Otherwise it remains merely a stream along which large ships cannot ply.

What Burma can take from India is its culture which today has fallen into disrepute. Never before in history has there been a single instance of such a large country with such an immense population securing its freedom not by violent conflict but through non-violence. You may say that the English had got fed up and they left.



That is not so. If there is anything to be learnt from India, it is non-violence. Not that we have learnt the lesson of non-violence fully. We are weak. We took to non-violence because we had not the weapons for a violent fight. Non-violence is the best weapon. Only the pure of heart can use it. I therefore told the Burmese Prime Minister that if he wished to take anything from India it should be this non-violence. He must not think that if India lapsed into barbarity, how could Burma which took its religion from India advance? I told him that if he wanted to copy India he must copy the good qualities that India once had and still retained. He must not take anything barbarous. We must export only what is good so that the world may learn from us. Had India not attained its freedom, Burma and Ceylon also would not have attained theirs. And India did not become free by resorting to the sword. And if we did not need the sword for securing freedom, we will not need it for sustaining it. If we cannot keep our freedom without the sword, then I shall think that India has done nothing for the world. Today we have an army. Attempts are being made to strengthen it. Attempts are also being made to further enlarge the Navy and the Air Force. I declare that in this way we are not really strengthening ourselves. We shall be doing no good to the world in this way. And if the world learns this kind of thing from us it is not going to gain anything, rather it will be doomed.

[From Hindi], Courtesy: All India Radio. Also Prarthana Pravachan—II, pp. 166-8



71. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

NEW DELHI,

December 5, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

The letters given to me here are sometimes too long. You cannot expect me to go through them and answer them, because it takes time even to read them. I cannot read them here for it would be wasting my time and yours. I have a note which mentions my meeting Liaquat Ali Khan. The writer asks if I am still not satisfied that nothing untoward has happened in Kathiawar. If the writer of the note is present I may tell him that nothing has happened in Kathiawar. Shamaldas Gandhi says that nothing has happened to justify the reports that I have received. There had been incidents but minor ones. They were given publicity by the Pakistan newspapers and telegrams were dispatched. The reports were terrible but such terrible things did not happen. Today I have another wire from Shamaldas. He says he has made investigations and found that such things had not taken place. Certainly after the Sardar's visit to Kathiawar nothing untoward has happened. The reports I had earlier received appeared to suggest it was the Sardar who incited the people to rowdyism. But after he went to Kathiawar no incidents took place. This changes the complexion of things. Shamaldas Gandhi says that he will tell Muslims not to send such telegrams. I have received further telegrams from the very Muslims who had earlier made the allegations, admitting that they were exaggerated and that they had made a mistake. They have also written to say that the reports carried by the Pakistan newspapers were incorrect, that the extent of the damage reported was also wrong and it could not be said that the Muslims were scared and nervous. I am happy to hear it. I have said that I shall do whatever I can for our Muslim brethren. We must never kick one who is already down. We must raise him up. This is the demand of humanity, of love, this is civilized behaviour. I shall never throw anyone down even if he is my enemy—though of course I have no enemy. It was a mere dream that the Muslims would get everything once Pakistan came into being. After all it is not as if only those who are in Pakistan would be left alive and those outside Pakistan would be killed. Pakistan is a veritable sea of Hindus and Muslims. Will they drive out all the Hindus and Sikhs from there? Those that have come out did not really want to leave their homes. But it has happened. I have received letters from Sikhs saying that they will know no rest till they are able to go back. For instance a



person may have a thousand-acre farm near Lyallpur where he had been growing wheat, bananas, cotton and fruits. How can he leave it for good? He will not rest till he can go back. And what happened in India? The displaced Sikhs were furious and wanted revenge. I said it was not humanity. It was barbarism. They should not indulge in it, that good should be returned for evil. We must not copy the wrong-doer, we must emulate the man who does good. It, therefore, gave me satisfaction when I received that wire from Kathiawar. I shall tell my Muslim brethren: if something had happened they should have toned it down to a half or even a quarter; they should not have exaggerated it and given it publicity in foreign countries. After all if Hindus and Sikhs—though there are no Sikhs there—go wild, can the world save the Muslims? Yes, they can say that we have not made the right use of our freedom. They can threaten to take it away. All that is possible. But the dead will not return to life thereby. We should therefore never exaggerate. Our agony is our own and no outsider can take it on himself. We should try to make light of it. We impress the world only when we exaggerate the good work done by another, not his folly.

There is another thing I must tell you. It does not concern you but I can convey it through you. I have told Brijkrishna not to give anyone any appointment to see me from the 6th to the 13th. That I do not want to see people does not mean that I am ill or that I want to enjoy myself. For many months now this matter has been under consideration. I cannot go to Sevagram. So people from Sevagram are coming here. The Kasturba Trust will be sitting from tomorrow. Then there will be meetings of the Spinners' Association, *Nayee Talim*, and Village Industries Association. The four associations are going to meet during this time. If they are properly conducted they will certainly consume some time. How am I to give my time to these meetings and to visitors? I have therefore requested people not to try to see me during this time. Not that I shall not be doing my own work. But people coming from outside want to see me out of curiosity.

As I have already said there have been talks going on about lifting the control on cloth, also on food. Not that it is going to happen tomorrow, but a process has started and everybody says I have done a good thing by suggesting it. I have received letters from all quarters saying that it would be good if the controls were lifted. Of course if the controls are lifted it will not mean that we shall be relieved of our obligations. Once decontrol comes into effect certain obligations devolve on the traders. I must tell Ghanshyamdas also to produce more cloth. He may say that he only



carries out orders. He produces what cloth he is asked to produce and he takes the price. But once the cloth is decontrolled, what will Ghanshyamdas and other friends do? Does it mean they will be free to loot the people? In that case I shall be having a very bad time. People will hold me responsible for it. I am a servant of India irrespective of my status. If what I say does not appeal to the Government, that is, to those running the Government, it will have no effect however much I may shout. I am not God so that whatever I may say will prevail. I discuss and decide and then say that the control on cloth and other articles should be lifted. It means that if five maunds of foodgrain is available today, we shall have ten maunds tomorrow because I feel that some of it has been hoarded. But if the peasants do not have any foodgrain and I say that the control should be lifted, will the people not then starve? I am not a fool who will let the people starve. I myself do not starve because Ghanshyamdas makes available to me goat's milk and fruit and vegetables. I believe that the farmers have enough foodgrain but that the price offered is so low that they cannot even feed themselves on it. They part with whatever the Government forces out of them. For the rest they say they will declare their stocks after the control is lifted. I feel that if the farmers can clear their stocks at a good price they will not starve. Admitting that we do not have as much foodgrain as we need, does it mean that a person should eat all that he can lay his hands on, while his neighbours starve? If we have sunk so low, then there is no cure. Control certainly is not the cure. If that happens the Government which is run by our Ministers must abdicate. People indulge in deceit. They are not truthful. The traders who should carry on trade for the benefit of the people are interested in filling their own coffers and in amassing wealth for their sons and daughters. What should the Government do? Should it use force or should it shoot people down? We do not have such power nor do we want such power. We may have a police force but not for shooting down people. If we start shooting down people who will be left alive? Where is our thirty-year old training? Where is our humanity? This cannot go on. In this way we shall only lose our newly gained freedom. I, therefore, say that controls must go. If the Government says that decontrol will lead to starvation, then I shall say that Panchayat Raj has not been established, democracy has not come to us, that Ramarajya has not been established and it is for *Ramarajya* (Kingdom of God) that I want to keep myself alive. I shall say that those who are made free from controls should have self-imposed controls on themselves and make others happy. The civil servants in the Government may call me names. They may say I have no right to interfere, that I have no experience of running a government, that afterwards it would be difficult to



reimpose the controls and feed the people. I shall say they are right. I have never been in the civil service, I have never run a government, but I have moved among the millions. I know their hearts. I understand them.

Now about cloth. About food you may say that we have not enough stock of it. But nobody has yet said that we do not have enough cotton. We have so much of it that we export it. You will say we do not have enough mills. I shall say the mills are in our homes. They are in the homes of all the women sitting here. Every one of you has been blessed with two hands. If you want clothes on your back you should spin. If you cannot, you may go naked. We have a number of mills but if the production does not come up to the requirement we must resort to hand-spinning and hand-weaving. Weaving is not difficult. We have so many weavers in our country that we can have any amount of cloth woven, but some people have a delicate taste. They will weave only mill-yarn. They cannot weave hand-spun yarn. If they start weaving hand-spun yarn there is no need to go naked. Then our beautiful country—the home of so many hundreds of millions who know their trade, who know how to produce cloth—cannot go naked. Therefore control on cloth is the limit of ignorance and the sooner it is lifted the better. So far as food grain is concerned the farmers and traders must declare that they produce and sell to meet the people's needs, and they will not indulge in dishonest practices. The farmers should understand that they have to grow crops not merely to feed themselves but to feed all. We must produce one seer where we produced only a half. But let us guide the people; let us provide them incentive. There is no need for anyone to go hungry or naked in India. We have been denuded of our cloth because of our ignorance. We do not produce as much food or as much milk as we need even though we have a large number of cattle. What is this if not folly?

[From Hindi], courtesy: All India Radio. Also Prarthana Pravachan—II, pp. 169-74



72. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

NEW DELHI,

December 6, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

You heard the bhajan and the Ramdhun sung by Subbulakshmi (1 M. S. Subbulakshmi, eminent exponent of Carnatak music). She is new to Delhi. Usually she gives music recitals. One ought to lose oneself while singing bhajans and Ramdhun. Today you must have realized why people are so keen to hear her. She has a melodious voice. I welcomed her message offering to come and sing here.

Today I do not wish to take more than 15 minutes. Yesterday I took 25 minutes which was too long. I am ashamed of it. I must train myself to finish within 15 minutes. Today I intend to take only 15 minutes and leave out what cannot be covered within that time.

I had a letter from a friend yesterday. I have only been able to read a part of it. I have another letter today which I have not been able to go through. I must ask to be excused. The letter which I have read in part says that I am too simple a man, that I do not know how the world's affairs are run and am apt to be deceived. The correspondent also explains the nature of the deception and cautions me to be careful. He asks me to see what is happening in Pakistan and suggests that we should do the same here. That we should take revenge I do not agree. We cannot burn the houses of the Muslims. However humble those houses may be they are as dear to their owners as the palaces of millionaires may be to them. It is in these houses that they live. When a Muslim has to go to Pakistan he suffers.

The correspondent asks when the displaced Hindus and Sikhs can go back to their homes. I may inform him that so long as they do not go back I shall not rest. It is a different thing if they die before that happens. So long as there is a single Hindu or Sikh left who does not get his house back, I shall not rest. Yes, one may not ask that the house that has been burnt should be restored to its former state. No government can do that, not even the Government of India. I shall say that the Hindus and Sikhs should go to Model Town and stay there. The Lahore Hindus and Sikhs can ask the Pakistan Government to return them their houses and their land just as they are. All that they should ask is that the Muslims who have occupied their properties should be



made to vacate them. We cannot ask them to raise houses on the land. They should merely return the land. Those who are now in the Indian Union should become truthful and decent. We must not imitate Pakistan. If they cut off their noses we can't do the same.

I shall further say to the correspondent that if we have made a mistake we must rectify it. Everyone makes mistakes. Only, one must not repeat them. Man is liable to err, even as he has the potentiality to do good. Once he rectifies his mistakes, he can only do good. If we stick to our dharma it is not necessary to advertise it to the world.

I have had to write about what happened to Kathiawar Muslims. I did the right thing. It is good to tell the Hindus there about it. It is good to tell the Government. It is our right. When we agreed to the formation of Pakistan we had not bargained for the houses of Hindus and Sikhs being burnt in Pakistan and their being driven out of the country. If mistakes have been made they must be rectified. Of course they can say that we should also rectify our own mistakes. They may say that the Muslims who had gone to Pakistan were driven out of India and that they should be taken back. If that is done the displaced Hindus and Sikhs could go back to Pakistan and the displaced Muslims in Pakistan could come back to India. This will be good both for India and Pakistan. If not, then both countries will fall in the eyes of the world. We have always conducted ourselves honourably. We won our freedom honourably. It is not I who says it. It is not Hindus and Muslims who say it. It is the whole world that says that we have attained our freedom by honourable means. We should preserve it by honourable means and not by resorting to rowdyism. Rowdyism could be the way to lose our freedom. If we keep our conduct and our behaviour clean the world will see that we have made amends for our former mistakes. What is the world going to do about Pakistan —you may ask. I shall say that the world does not have to do anything or say anything. Pakistan has to cleanse itself.

I am reminded of the Resolution (Vide Appendix "A.I.C.C. Resolutions", Resolution (2), "Repatriation of Refugees", 15-11-1947.) passed by the A.I.C.C. had my support and that I am responsible for its being passed. I am however told that people do not want it. Displaced Hindus and Sikhs do not want to go back to Pakistan. I do not say that they should go back as beggars. True, they have come away from Pakistan because they were helpless. But they must go back with dignity. The Pakistan Muslims should tell them that they have changed for the better and now invite them to go back. Similarly we should tell the Muslims who have gone away that their houses and their land are



as they had left behind and that they should come and occupy them. If we get over our madness and behave as gentlemen, things will be all right. Where is the deception here? I do not deceive anyone. The world should not look for deception here. The A.I.C.C. has passed the Resolution that the displaced Hindus and Sikhs should all go back to their homes and land in Lyallpur and they should be invited to do so with love. Our Sikh brethren used to be farmers there. They have to go there in any case. This is my dream. I wish to live to see this dream realized. If it is not the will of God that this dream be realized, He will take me away. That is why I am staying in Delhi. If I cannot do this here, where else can I do anything? If only Pakistan would mend its ways, confess its errors and assure us that it would behave decently, all would be well and we could live as good neighbours. There is no reason why we should remain enemies of each other. Enmity cannot be our dharma. I have concluded within ten minutes today.

[From Hindi], Courtesy: All India Radio. Also Prarthana Pravachan—II, pp. 175-88]



73. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

NEW DELHI,

December 7, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

Today I wish to talk to you about a very complicated matter, which is also rather sensitive. It has appeared in the newspapers. You will have seen that yesterday some Hindu women workers went to Lahore and met some Muslim women there. (1 An Inter-Dominion Conference was held in Lahore on December 6, to consider ways and means for the restoration of abducted women. A joint appeal to the people of Pakistan and India to restore all abducted women was made by the representatives at the Conference. Prominent among the signatories to the appeal were: Ghazanfar Ali, Iftikhar Hussain Khan of Mamdot, Begum Liaquat Ali Khan, Begum Shah Nawaz, Begum Bashir Ahmed, Iftikhar-ud-din, K. C. Neogy, Swaran Singh, Rameshwari Nehru, Mridula Sarabhai and Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya.) They discussed the question of what ought to be done about the Hindu women abducted by Muslims in Pakistan and the Muslim women abducted by Hindus and Sikhs in East Punjab. A very large number of Muslims have already left India and it is possible some more may yet leave. We should now resolve that not a single Muslim will be compelled to leave. If they voluntarily opt for Pakistan that is a different matter. But the fact is that no one wants voluntarily to leave India. Why should anyone want to give up one's house and property? It is not as if they had houses and properties waiting for them in Pakistan. Those voluntarily opting for Pakistan or going for the sake of jobs are very few, which is natural because there are not enough jobs for them in Pakistan. And if their established businesses in India are not affected, there is no reason for them to go.

But what of the women? This is a complicated question. Some say that about 12,000 women had been abducted by Hindus and Sikhs and twice that number had been abducted by Muslims in Pakistan. Some others say that this estimate is too low. I would say 12,000 is not a small number. Why, a thousand, or even one, is not a small number. Why should even a single woman be abducted? It is barbaric for a Hindu woman to be abducted by a Muslim or a Muslim woman to be abducted by a Hindu or a Sikh. Some people believe that 12,000 represents a very conservative figure. Let us say that 12,000 women had been abducted by Muslims of Pakistan and another 12,000 women had been abducted by Hindus and Sikhs of East Punjab. The problem is how to recover them. The women workers had been to Pakistan to consider how to



solve this problem. The Hindu and Sikh women carried away by force should be restored to their families. Similarly the Muslim women taken away should be restored to theirs. This task should not be left to the families of the women. It should be our charge. They also met Ghazanfar Ali (Minister in charge of Relief and Rehabilitation in Pakistan; he had suggested at the Conference that a joint organization of the Dominions of India and Pakistan should be formed for the restoration of kidnapped women and children to their families) and a police officer whose name I forget. Mridulabehn (Daughter of Ambalal Sarabhai; one of the trustees of the Kasturba Gandhi National Memorial Trust) and Rameshwaribehn (Rameshwari Nehru; Vice-President, Central Board of Harijan Sevak Sangh; President of the women's section set up by the Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation), who had been to Lahore, both gave me separate reports and told me that they discussed the question of how abducted women should be recovered. Obviously it will not do to send police parties or armed units as an escort for these women. Of course some Hindu and Sikh women workers could go to Pakistan accompanied by police officers from East Punjab to bring back the abducted women. But this is not being done. It is said that the women concerned do not now want to return, but still they have to be brought back. Muslim women similarly have to be taken back to Pakistan. It is also said that the Sikh and Hindu women concerned have embraced Islam and married their Muslim abductors. It could be true. But I do not admit that they are not willing to return. Similar is the case of Muslim women in India.

We have become barbarous in our behaviour. It is true of East Punjab as well as of West Punjab. It is meaningless to ask which of them is more barbaric. Barbarity has no degrees. Raja Ghazanfar Ali says that both parties have indulged in atrocious behaviour. It is not necessary to ask who has been more guilty. Atrocities have taken place on a mass scale and it is irrelevant who took the first step. The need is for women who have been abducted and harassed to be taken back to their homes. It is my belief that the police cannot do this. The army cannot do this. Yes, a team of women workers could be sent to East Punjab and another team to West Punjab but I do not think that would be effective. I can say as a man of experience that this is not the way to do this work. This is a task for the Governments to tackle. I am not saying that the Governments were behind the abductions. It was not the Government of East Punjab which organized abductions. In East Punjab Hindus and Sikhs were responsible for them and in West Punjab Muslims were responsible. What further investigation is required? Whatever the number—I put it at 12,000 at least—East Punjab and West Punjab should return them.



It is being said that the families of the abducted women no longer want to receive them back. It would be a barbarian husband or a barbarian parent who would say that he would not take back his wife or daughter. I do not think the women concerned had done anything wrong. They had been subjected to violence. To put a blot on them and to say that they are no longer fit to be accepted in society is unjust. At least this does not happen among Muslims. At least Islam is liberal in this respect, so this is a matter that the Governments should take up. The Governments should trace all these women. They should be traced and restored to their families. The police and women social workers cannot effectively deal with this. The problem is difficult, which means to say that public opinion is not favourable. You cannot say that all the 12,000 women were abducted by ruffians. I do not think that is the case. It is good men that have become ruffians. People are not born as goondas; they become so under certain circumstances. Both the Governments had been weak in this respect. Neither Government has shown enough strength to recover the abducted women. Had both the Governments exercised authority, what happened in East Punjab and West Punjab would not have happened. But our independence was born only three months ago. It is still in its infancy.

In my view Pakistan is responsible for spreading this poison. But what good can come from apportioning responsibility? There is only one way of saving these women and that is that the Governments should even now wake up to their responsibility, give this task the first priority and all their time and accomplish it even at the cost of their lives. Only thus can these women be rescued. Of course we should help the Government if it requires help. As I told you yesterday I should not speak for more than fifteen minutes; so I end here. Two or three minutes are still left but I shall not use them.

[From Hindi], Courtesy: All India Radio. Also Prarthana Pravachan—II. pp. 178-82



74. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

(As Gandhiji was observing silence, his written speech was read out at the prayer meeting.)

NEW DELHI,

Silence Day, December 8, 1947

A Muslim organization has cautioned me against taking at face value anything said to me whether by a Hindu or a Muslim and making it the basis of an argument. It suggests that I had better investigate the matter first and then decide what to do and it adds that I should personally visit Kathiawar and see things for myself. I have already said that this is a thing I cannot at present undertake. I should do what I can remaining in and around Delhi. Those who offer me advice forget that so far it has been possible to have the charges withdrawn. When one wants to arrive at the truth for the sake of the truth, the result is always good. This has been repeatedly tried. In such matters patience and perseverance are of the utmost importance.

I keep receiving letters from Sind. There is one from Karachi which says: "There are no killings but Hindus cannot live here with honour and dignity. The Muslims who have gone there from India can enter any Hindu homes at will and announce their intention to stay there. They have no authority, but we dare not say no to them. There had been innumerable incidents of this kind. The Karachi of a few months ago has become a thing of dreams." This is the substance of the letter which is very long. What the letter says can, I feel, be believed. It means that there is total anarchy there. This is the way of killing people slowly. There is also such a thing as killing souls. I appeal to Pakistan to stop this lawlessness. It is a disease and the sooner it gets rid of the better.

Sugar has been decontrolled. Cereals, pulses and cloth will soon be decontrolled. The purpose of decontrol is not to bring down the prices all at once. The purpose for the present is to make our life natural. Controls imposed from above are always bad. In our country, this is especially so because we have a vast population spread over a country 1,900 miles long and 1,500 miles wide. I do not take count of Pakistan here. We are not a martial nation. We produced, or at any rate we can produce, our own food and enough cotton for our requirements. When controls are lifted people will have a feeling of freedom and they will also have the right to make mistakes. This is an age-old way of making progress to advance by making mistakes and rectifying them. If you keep a child wrapped up in cotton wool it will die or become



stunted. If you want to see him grow into a strong man you will have to train him to stand every kind of weather. Similarly if the Government deserves to be called a government it must teach people how to face shortages. It must teach them to weather bad times by united effort. It is no good helping them somehow to keep alive without their having to work for it.

Viewed thus, decontrol means that instead of merely a few people in the Government the millions have to learn to be farsighted. The Government will have to assume fresh responsibilities on behalf of the people so that it can discharge its obligation towards them. It would have to improve transport. It would have to teach people ways of improving the yield. In this matter the Food Ministry will have to pay more attention to small farmers than to big landlords. The Government thus has on the one hand to trust the people as a whole and keep a watch on their occupations and on the other to keep in mind the interest of the small farmers. So far no attention has been paid to them and yet a large majority of the population consists of them. The peasant himself consumes what he grows. He sells his small surplus in order to buy the other necessities of life. One consequence of controls was that the peasant could realize only a very low price from the market for his produce. Therefore in so far as the peasant gets a higher price for food grain the price of food grain will increase. The consumer should not mind that. The Government will have to see that any benefit from the rise in prices under the new arrangement goes wholly to the farmer. This will have to be explained to the people every day or at least every week. Millers and all kinds of middlemen will have to cooperate with the Government and work under its direction.

I think this is being done. All these various persons and organizations should work in full concorde and in full cooperation. So far they have always exploited the poor. The rivalry that has so marked their attitude to each other should go. Especially in the matter of food and cloth no one should work for the sake of profit. If decontrol leads to traders making larger profits, then the purpose of decontrol will be defeated. Let us hope that capitalists and businessmen will offer full cooperation.

[From Hindi], Courtesy: All India Radio. Also Prarthana Pravachan—II, pp. 182-5



75. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

NEW DELHI,

December 9, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

Today I attended a meeting of the Trustees of the A.I.S.A. and naturally I had to speak for half an hour to the women. If I have the time—for I shall be finishing the speech in 15 minutes—I shall tell you about that today. Otherwise I shall do so tomorrow.

You will have seen in the papers today a report saying that Sardar Patel and I are going to Pilani. Why? For a change of air. It is a mere canard. I do not know what the Sardar has in mind but I certainly know that this is not the time to seek a change of air. The Sardar works all day long and rests at night and that is all the change of air he gets. The same applies to me. It is true that I am not so overworked because I do not have to run a government. But I receive many visitors and I get tired. Therefore I have to give myself rest. The air is quite congenial in Delhi at present and there is no need to go out for a change of air. What can Pilani offer? So far as I am concerned I have taken a pledge to do or die. I have not fulfilled that pledge. I cannot understand why newspapers publish such rumours. I can only conclude that a large part of what the newspapers put out consists of falsehoods. Then I came to know—though not from newspapers—that since we are going there certain directives have come from Jaipur about the quantity of sugar, wheat and other provisions that we shall be needing. Although we are only two persons to be provided for, a scarcity seems to have been created in the market. It is of course only hearsay. If true it reveals a shocking state of affairs that our movements should influence the market. It is as though we lived only in order to eat or that we had large retinues following us. This should not be so. The Sardar is a poor man, and so am I. It is true that he lives in a palatial house; so do I at present. Of course the best thing would have been for him and for me to live in a mud hut. Anyway, what I was trying to tell you is about the way rumours are spread. After all I am available here. They might have asked me if I planned to go to Pilani. I now have a telegram from the Associated Press in this connection which hurts me even more. The Sardar is always busy but they should have asked me whether we are going.



I have a letter from a friend from Sind. He has given his name but I shall not disclose it though he would not mind my doing so. I had told you about a letter from a doctor in Sind who had reported the hardships of the Sind Harijans. (Vide “Speech at Prayer Meeting”, 3-12-1947.) The doctor has been arrested. Whether he was arrested because he wrote to me or for some other reason I do not know. Many people who served Harijans have been arrested. This is the kind of thing that is happening in Sindh. I admit that people are not being murdered, but as I told you yesterday this is worse than murder. When you murder a man he is dead and everyone then puts up with the fact, but to harass people and kill them by inches is much worse. A man was arrested and then released—maybe they will release others too. But it is bad to arrest people like this. I do not wish to make accusations against the Pakistan Government but I must warn them that if they keep arresting Harijan workers in this way it will be impossible for the workers to continue to stay in Sindh. The same is true of Harijans. This sort of thing was common during the British rule. Must we continue the same practice?

I still have a few minutes, so I shall tell you about another matter, viz., about the women. The Kasturba Memorial Trust has been set up because there are 700,000 villages in India and women and children living in them must be served. But there is a larger issue confronting us; a large number of Hindu and Sikh women have been abducted by Muslims and an equally large number of Muslim women have been abducted by Hindus and Sikhs. Leave aside the question which community has abducted more women. In any case under each of the two Governments no less than 12,000 women and girls have been abducted. What is the Kasturba Trust to do? I shall do what lies in my power. One thing is obvious, that we cannot take up this work to advertise ourselves. Those who are public servants have to do the work of service. Once the work is over there is an end to it. It is of no importance whether the matter is reported in the newspapers or not. Again, we have to consider the various things that should be done for women. I can suggest a few things. Most women workers we have are from the cities. We could find a few in villages and even these had some connection with cities. I do not say that it is bad, that it is wrong to have anything to do with cities. But for the last 150 years the trend has been for cities to exist only to squeeze wealth out of the villages. They took raw material from the villages, carried on trade with foreign countries and made crores of rupees. This money did not go to the villagers, or only a very small fraction of it did. The bulk of it went to millionaires and the mill-owners. Towns exist to exploit the villages. The city culture does not therefore fit into the framework of villages. A woman worker from a town should not



carry to the villages the atmosphere and the ways of towns. Maybe she has a lot of money and articles of luxury. Maybe she has a motor car, cosmetics, dresses of velvet and toothpastes, foreign or indigenous, tooth brushes, dainty shoes and sandals. If she takes all these things along with her, how can she serve the villages? If with these things she sets the standard for the villagers they will devour the villages. The cities should be for increasing the prosperity of the villages, for making money available to them for developing the village culture. But what is happening is the very opposite of this. I cannot explain everything to you. All I have to say is that the women workers who truly want to serve, not to exploit, must have a sense of propriety and take to the villages only the things that it would be appropriate to take. Such reforms as they wish to introduce must be in conformity with the genius of the villages. If that happens our seven lakh villages which today are in a sunken state can come up. The villages are not inhabited by uncivilized people with no art and nothing good to show in life. There is much beauty in the villages. There is much art and there are industries that the whole world knows about. Village crafts have been appreciated all over the world. Therefore the women workers who would serve villages must leave behind the things associated with city-life. They should take with them only what is good and moral. Then alone can they help in the uplift of the millions of our women and children. This much at any rate let us do.

[From Hindi], Courtesy: All India Radio. Also Prarthana Pravachan—II, pp. 185-8



76. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

NEW DELHI,

December 10, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

Yesterday I told you that I attended the meeting of the A. I. S. A. and addressed a few words to the women. Today again I had to go to a meeting of the Talimi Sangh. But maybe I shall have to leave that out for today. I must speak today of the A. I. S. A. You know what the Spinners' Association is. It carries on khadi activity which is centered round the charkha. First, the cotton has to be ginned, carded, made into slivers, and then spun and woven. If the hundreds of millions of people in India take to this work—it is easy, we can even teach it to children—all the expenditure on cloth can be saved. If cloth is thus manufactured in villages it becomes almost free. And if cotton is grown in the villages the saving would be twice as much, for we would have to spend nothing on cloth and we could also benefit from the craft and prosper. I therefore feel that if we do not behave foolishly there should be no dearth of cloth in our country. There should be no dearth even if there is not a single textile mill left in India. Today we have to look up to the mills. We have forgotten the charkha and khadi. People do certainly sport khadi caps because they have got used to it, having worn it during the struggle for freedom. But one feels sad that khadi is not a living thing in our lives. The Spinners' Association has been working for many years. It has disbursed crores of rupees and yet we are where we were. This is a matter to be pondered over. The charkha teaches us ahimsa. If everybody took up the charkha the villages would become prosperous and would not present the depressing spectacle they do today. During the discussion at the meeting, it was shown how, through the charkha and khadi, the shortage in cloth could be made good and crores of rupees could be given to the villagers, not in cash but in the saving that would be effected from not having to buy mill-cloth. It may be said that in manufacturing khadi we would have to pay for the cotton. But the price of cotton would be very little. If we use all the cotton that is today produced, it should be enough. But the Government gives all the facilities to the mills. It is more concerned for the capitalists than for the farmers. It is a painful fact. I am not against capitalists, I am myself staying in the house of a capitalist. But I know the attitude that the capitalists have adopted. The Government may say that they do everything for the poor. But even the British used to say it. The truth is that the



interests of the poor are not served. The Government should humbly accept this. It is easy to say that the poor should be helped. Let the ministers decide to go and live in the villages. If they are true socialists—and if I have my way I would make them behave so—if they are true servants of the poor, not only of the workers but of the peasants who are more numerous, if they want to uplift the people, I would tell them that they should only wear khadi. There is nothing to prevent them from producing their own khadi at home. I will tell the people what they are doing. Ever since I came here I have been saying this but have been able to achieve nothing. All that I have managed to get is a few crores of rupees for the villages. But what I want is that the music of the charkha should be heard in every home and no cloth except khadi should be seen anywhere. If this happened the poverty prevailing in the villages would disappear. That it has not so far happened is our misfortune.

One cannot say that in other respects things are going on well here. There are speeches being made—I shall not name the speakers because full particulars are still lacking—that the few Muslims still remaining here will not be allowed to stay on, that the mosques still standing will be taken over to house Hindus. What else will happen only God knows. I think that if the Hindus occupied the mosques it would be the end of Hinduism. So much for Delhi.

Something about Ajmer has come to our notice. And it is the same story there. I have visited the town many times. It has Muslims and Hindus in large numbers. There is an important Muslim shrine (1 Of Hazarat Moinuddin Chishti) there. It is also visited by Hindus and thus the two have been living in amity. They are one not in religion but in their ways of life. Not that there were no quarrels between the two communities but today the rioting has been much more serious. It seems from what little has appeared in the newspapers that a large number of Muslims have been killed. There was first a scare among the Muslims and those who could run away leaving a few behind. Then followed the riots. I understand that is what is happening in the villages all around. I shall talk to you again after I have full particulars. All I say is that it is a shameful affair. Let us pray to God to give us the wisdom not to destroy Hinduism by our conduct. It cannot do any good to destroy Hinduism in the process of killing Muslims. If we wish to live we must let live. Man was not made by God to live through killing others. It must not be allowed to happen that the Hindus and Sikhs in Pakistan and Muslims in India are killed and the rest become slaves. We are inviting our own destruction. There is a saying in Sanskrit: “A man loses his reason when he is to be destroyed.”¹ our minds



have become perverse. The cries of “kill, slaughter, drive out the Muslims”, are a sign of our having lost our reason. There are many other things I want to say but I have not the time, having resolved not to speak for more than 15 minutes.

[From Hindi], Courtesy: All India Radio. Also Prarthana Pravachan—II, pp. 189-92



77. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

NEW DELHI,

December 11, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

A friend desires that the verses from the Koran we recite here should be explained. These verses are ancient. The Koran was composed by Mohammed Saheb—it was spoken by him, thirteen centuries ago. The extracts from it that we recite are considered sublime like our mantras. The very reading of it bestows merit on the reader. It is good to know the meaning, of course, but even without knowing it a correct recitation itself is of great value. I can now explain the substance of it. I do not know Arabic or Persian. I do possess a translation, but it is not here now. Tomorrow I can provide a literal translation. In substance, it is a prayer to God. God is one and the same, by whatever name we may call Him. Allah is one of His names. Then His attributes are described. He is called Rahim and Rehman but He is one God. It is then said that God alone can save us from Satan. Satan drags us down and makes us do evil deeds only God can save us from that fate. Man admits that he on his own does not do noble deeds but God prompts him to do so. Man is like a drop of water in a sea. If God does not save man Satan will devour him. God is great. God is All there is. His mercy alone can save us. I should say that however much we may recite this prayer, ponder over it and follow its import it is not enough. You may ask why in that case Muslims indulge in such barbarous behaviour. But then do Christians who have made so much progress, who are learned, follow the teachings of the Bible? Where are the Christians that live according to the Bible? Where are the Hindus who conduct themselves according to the Gayatri? We recite from Ishopanishad, “All things are pervaded by the Lord”, meaning that God is in everything. He gives us everything. Whatever a man possesses has been given to him by God. We should renounce all and enjoy what we must. Nothing is ours. House, property and everything is surrendered to God. It is a great thing. Then it is said that we should not be envious of others’ riches. We should not covet another’s wealth. Let the Hindus but conduct themselves according to this one single mantra. Let the whole world thus conduct itself. It is not for the Hindus alone. It does not even mention Hindus. Let the Sikhs conduct themselves according to the mantra. It is not as if they did not believe in it. If everyone conducted himself accordingly the tragedy we have been witnessing all around us



could not have come to pass. Everyone is not wicked, nor is everyone an angel. We cannot say that all Sikhs are wicked while all Hindus are angels or that all Muslims are angels.

Another verse is from the Parsi scripture. The first mantra in the prayer proclaims obeisance to the Guru. It is followed by other verses in Sanskrit. Then there are bhajans. And yet we do not keep our hearts clean. It is a painful thing.

I had said I would explain to you what was being done in the Harijan Colony. But I have to leave it for the present, for there are other things to speak of and I have only fifteen minutes. Some Muslim friends from the U. P. came to see me today for the second time. They told me that they had been to Punjab in Pakistan. They found other Indian Muslims there. They had planned to work out with the Muslims there some kind of a compromise which would make things easier here in India. They had obtained my permission for the visit. They returned today. They said they wanted one thing from me. I should ask the Hindus and the Sikhs to return to Lahore. These Muslim friends will accompany them. Should it become necessary they will be the first to lay down their lives. But that will not be necessary. They have talked to the authorities there. They are willing to rehabilitate the non-Muslims there. I asked them to give it to me in writing. It is not something that can be done right away. It is a big thing. If this can be done a great part of my work will have been accomplished. They said, I should at least test their word. They have given to me their views in writing. Their report says:

The Peace Mission from the U. P. visited West Punjab twice. The first visit lasted a month and the second a week. The conditions there are much improved. The Government as well as the public are trying to re-establish order. It is the desire of the West Punjab Government that the non-Muslims residing there at present should continue to live there and those who have migrated from there should go back to their homes. The Government has issued the directive that the non-Muslims returning to their homes in West Punjab should be given back their rights over their houses and properties and given full protection and provided with all the facilities they may need. If, notwithstanding all the pleading, some non-Muslims do not wish to go back, they will have full rights to exchange or sell their properties in any way they like. The Government is being very severe with those provoking riots and are taking all measures to ensure protection to those who may return. The Peace Mission has been able to persuade the people and the Government of Pakistan to accept the



responsibility to protect the honour and dignity of non-Muslims. We, the members of the U. P. Peace Mission request the non-Muslim brethren from Pakistan to go back to West Punjab and settle there. We are willing to accompany them on their journey back and will protect them at the cost of our own lives. We will return only after these non-Muslims are fully assured of their safety.

This is signed by four people. It is a very promising development. The newspapers have put out something quite different but we should not worry about that. There are many refugees concentrated in Model Town. In Lahore Hindus and Sikhs have large properties. There is also a Gurdwara there. I asked the Mission from U. P. if the Sikhs could go back there. They gave the assurance that Sikhs could go there. They said it was not that people in general had become friends; there was still some poison in the air; it could not be removed all at once. But the Government had made sure that there would be no more killings.

It would be a great thing. I had not thought things could improve so quickly. I do not know how far this is the case, but let us in our hearts grant the possibility that there are people among Muslims who can do this. It would be inhuman to think that all Muslims are wicked. There are very good men among them. A Hindu friend had accompanied the Muslim friends. He brought me a letter. I have not the time to read it out but its substance is the same. He runs a large hotel visited daily by about a thousand people. A majority of them are perhaps Muslims but certainly Hindus also go to the hotel. They find no difficulties in their way. He says there is nothing to prevent the Hindu refugees from going back there. I will not say that they must go back right away. Nor would I say that they should not go. But it would be good if they did go back.

[From Hindi], Courtesy: All India Radio. Also Prarthana Pravachan—II, pp. 192-6



78. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

NEW DELHI,

December 12, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

I have a letter from a refugee, saying I had advised the refugees yesterday to start going back. I had said nothing of the kind. I had said that we would have to see about it and could say something definite only after I had made sure that what I had been told represented the truth. The correspondent says that he wants to go back right away because here there is anarchy all round, no one cares about anyone else, there is no food to eat and no clothes to wear, and nothing is being done for the refugees. I am aware that all this is true. Things have reached a stage where everyone cannot be looked after and everything cannot be made available. I think that all that is possible is being done. But even if it is not being done I cannot advise anyone to go back. If they had not come at all it would have been different. But since they have come they should return only after things are fully normal. They should certainly be in readiness, for the sooner they are in a position to go back the better it will be.

Yesterday I had said I would read out to you the translation of the verse from the Koran recited here. I had already explained to you the substance. The translation runs: "I surrender myself to Allah to save myself from the wicked Satan. I begin with the name of God. Whatever I do, I do in His name because it is He who provides everything, He who is Rahim, the mighty, and Rehman, the merciful. He is all in all. God is one. He is unborn. It is He who causes everything to be born. He has no equal. He is sufficient unto Himself. That is why we say that He is faultless and formless. He is the home of all attributes. His attributes cannot be fathomed."

Today I have four or five letters. One is from Kathiawar. I had mentioned a letter from some Muslims from Kathiawar (Vide "Speech at Prayer Meeting", 5-12-1947.) but a few Muslims object even to that. I do not know why. The same people who had made accusations had written to me that nothing much had happened and if there had been some slight disturbance the Congressmen had tried their best to establish peace and that they were living happily in their homes.

Another letter is from Burma and yet another from perhaps Bombay. It is unsigned and I do not know where to send my reply. The letter from Bombay says that



I do nothing but create confusion. Whether or not I am creating confusion, I know, and you who hear me also know. It says I should investigate what happened in Kathiawar, but how can, I unless I am supplied with details? It is not within my power to initiate any investigation. I can only ask the Government to do so.

Another letter is about Ajmer. It is from the Hindus. They say what I had said was not the truth. (Vide "Speech at Prayer Meeting", 10-12-1947.) There had been rioting no doubt but it was not started by the Hindus. It was started by the Muslims. It had always been like that. Then I realized that this is the other side of the picture. God alone knows what is true and what is not. I had based my statement on what I had seen in the newspapers. I had also heard things from various people. If we persist in such conduct we cannot keep the Government going.

A correspondent wants money to be made available for the renovation of the Somnath temple. The Sardar had agreed that the temple should be renovated but that the money should not be taken from the Junagadh treasury or the treasury of the Government of India. The correspondent asks why the money should not thus be made available. I do not wish to go into the question in any detail. All I can say is that if money is taken from the Government for this purpose, then the same rule should apply to other cases also. It will have far-reaching consequences.

According to newspaper reports there has been rowdyism in Calcutta. (On December 11, there was a demonstration in Calcutta against the Security Bill, which was pending in the Assembly. One person was killed and several people were injured in the clash between the demonstrators and the police.) It seems that we have got used to thinking that we can take what we want by resorting to rowdyism. It is a dangerous trend. This is a thing I have never taught. We fought against the British for thirty years. But it was a non-violent struggle. There was no place in it for physical assaults or snatching things by force. The Government in Bengal is our government. It is run by Congressmen. They should not have been subjected to such behaviour. Supposing they have made a mistake—I personally do not know where their mistake lay— rowdyism is not the way to point it out. Why should we indulge in barbaric behaviour? There were students among those who indulged in rowdyism. They are well-educated. It hardly behoves them to stop the members of the Assembly from entering the Assembly, to block all the entrances and, not stopping there, to get into the Assembly itself. But that is what they did. It seems to me that if we persist in this kind of thing the Government cannot be carried on for long. The demonstration was intended to make the Assembly desist from enacting the



Bill that the demonstrators did not want. The Bill proposed by the Government is meant for preventing people from indulging in violent activities. Even if the demonstrators did not like this Bill, they should have expressed their opposition in a peaceful way. They should not have indulged in rowdyism. We did not do such things against the British, If any people did so I used to admonish them. We always behaved as gentlemen—I for one even used to undertake fasts.

Our Government today is faced with a number of important tasks. Those tasks have to be attended to. We cannot complain if it becomes necessary for the police to resort to lathi charge or use of tear-gas or to firing. Freedom does not mean that those provoking breach of peace should not be punished. If this happens one should not complain. There are various lawful ways of voicing protests. You can talk to people, write in the newspapers, complain to the Parliament or to the Central Government. We have all the necessary means. We cannot say the Government is ineffective. It is only three months old. We are like a three-month-old child. One cannot say we are mature. I would therefore humbly plead with those who resort to rowdyism to desist from it.

It is not that all of those indulging in rowdyism are hooligans or illiterate people. There are among them well-educated people. If they carry on such activities all the work we want to do will come to a stop. We have to reach food to the people. We have to provide them assistance in various other ways. It seems that it has become a profession with some to have all work stopped. This should not be so. It is a mercy that the entire population of Calcutta was not involved in this. But even if they were, it would not have been a good thing. This kind of thing should stop. People should realize that the Government belongs to them and if the Government does not help them they should protest in lawful ways.

[From Hindi], Courtesy: All India Radio. Also Prarthana Pravachan—II, pp. 196-9



79. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

NEW DELHI,

December 13, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

Yesterday I told you that I was going to Harijan Nivas to do some work there. The meetings of the Charkha Sangh and Talimi Sangh, etc., were being held there in which I had something to do. I shall speak to you about that.

Today I would speak to you about the charkha which was the subject of discussion there. What is the significance of the charkha? Why do I lay so much emphasis on it? It is true that when I first discovered the charkha, it was a common thing in Punjab. But I did not know about it. And when women came and placed before me heaps and heaps of yarn it made me very happy. I took a charkha from there. The same thing I saw later in Gujarat. By Gujarat I do not mean the Gujarat of Punjab which is a district and a town. I am speaking of the Gujarat which is near Bombay. Vijapur is a town in the Gaekwar State. There was a woman worker there who used to travel a good deal. Her name was Gangabehn. She came to know of my craze for the charkha. She too went to Vijapur. In Gujarat women, who lived in purdah and included both Muslims and Rajputs, used to spin. But no one took notice of their spinning. Gangabehn told them that she would buy all the yarn they could spin. They then began to sell all their yarn to her. Women would line up to go to her, give their yarn and take slivers from her. I do not wish to go into the question of who made the slivers. They also got some money from her. Later, as we progressed, the amount of money the women received also increased. In this way lakhs of homes could get some money earned by the women. The charkha thus became very popular there and through this work of khadi the women were able to earn enough money for their food. Their demands were small. They did not ask for a daily wage of two rupees, or three rupees. They got two piece and they were content. When they got three or four they were more than satisfied. Still later the progress was much more.

Afterwards when I thought over it I realized that the charkha had tremendous potentiality. What is this power? What can the charkha achieve? The charkha represents the power of non-violence. If on the one side there is the armed might of the whole world and on the other the charkha plied by the chaste hands— not



unworthy hands—of our women, the power of the charkha is greater. You have all had a glimpse of that power. I have had a little more of it. But no one amongst us has known the whole of it. People merely thought that the charkha was only for poor women. That it certainly is. But it is also a symbol of non-violence. If people knew this they would not burn the charkha.

Time was when the whole of India plied the charkha and it enjoyed pride of place. There were no mills then either in India or anywhere else in the world. Cotton textiles were sent to the outside world from India and there was a time when Dacca muslin known as shabnam (Literally “dew”) was very popular. It was greatly valued by people outside India. They appreciated its beauty. I do not wish to go into all that history, though it is quite interesting. Nevertheless at that time the charkha was a symbol of slavery, for women were then forced to give a certain quantity of yarn and this was done by order of the government. And the Government was not a Muslim government but a Hindu government. It is all described in the books written at the behest of the Hindu Government. Later on Bengal passed into Muslim hands, but this system goes back to much earlier times. The charkha then truly stood for slavery. Women were forced to spin; they had to supply fixed quantities of yarn and they could not even ask to be paid for it. The Government itself decided what little money was to be paid for their labour and when even that money was not paid the women could do nothing about it. The attitude then prevalent was that after all women were born to do such work. They should be thankful if they were paid just a little money for it. It is a tragic history the way women were exploited and I do not wish to go into it. The charkha which was then a symbol of slavery has been transformed into a symbol of our freedom, and that is what I have been shouting from the house-tops.

During the Khilafat days the Ali Brothers were quick to seize on the charkha. They said that we should now be able to gain a victory over England through the balls of yarn prepared by our women. All we had to do was to fling the balls at those who imported cloth from England to sell it here. This was in 1920. But the work of the charkha had been started perhaps in 1916. In 1919 (Gandhiji had toured the Punjab in October-December 1919.) I had toured the Punjab. You may ask me why, although we have gained freedom, this storm is raging in India. The reason for it is that in truth we have not embraced the charkha. It is only women who have done some work in this direction. They liked what I said because I am their friend and their servant. Some of them came out from their seclusion after I entered the field. Before that women would



not attend meetings nor speak at meetings. So women were kind to me and they took up the charkha. But if they had taken up the charkha not out of kindness to me but in the knowledge that the charkha would give them strength and give India strength, we would not have been in the predicament we are in today. We have to develop in us the power that non-violence alone can give. For that we shall once again have to adopt the charkha. Today we have forgotten the charkha. We shall have to accept the charkha with all that it stands for. Only then can we sing the glory of the tri-colour. That is why we have the charkha in the middle of the tri-colour though of course now the figure has been reduced to a wheel and we find a different interpretation for it. (Attributing great significance to the Chakra, Prof. Radha Kumud Mookerjee traced its origin to Lord Vishnu's Sudarshan Chakra—the Cosmic Circle, comprehending all that is animate or inanimate. The Buddha called it the Dhamma-Chakka—the Wheel of Righteousness—which was later adopted by Emperor Ashoka as the State symbol.) That interpretation is not bad. The idea behind the three colours was that the Hindus, Muslims and others should work together and the idea of having the charkha on it was that such work should be pursued through the charkha. Today we have a larger army. We are trying to augment it further. Our expenditure on the army has increased enormously. What if the British are no longer here? It is a tragedy and a shame. For so long we fought through the charkha and the moment we have power in our hands we forget it. Today we look up to the army. It is because we have forgotten the charkha that we indulge in mutual fighting. Our mistake was to imagine that the charkha was a thing only for women.

When I told the Sikhs and Muslims of the Punjab to ply the charkha they were shocked. Could the charkha be for men? Men had swords in their hands. I merely laughed. Later a few Sikhs and Muslims accepted my advice and began to spin quite well. But still I must say that the charkha has not made for itself a home in Punjab. But I do not want them to take up the charkha out of kindness to me. They may well burn the charkha and give up wearing khadi. The charkha being a symbol of non-violence and a repository of great power, it is an emblem of courage. Let us embrace that ahimsa with deliberation and with all our heart and intellect. Then no one can take it away from us. If the ten crore adults in our country take to spinning there can never be a famine of cloth in India. We produce a great quantity of cotton and we can earn crores of rupees. The important thing is that no military force can stand up to the power created by crores of people working together. It is my fault, not that of ahimsa, if I cannot prove that. That is because I am lacking in *tapashcharya*. But you cannot say that ahimsa does not have the power. That power can find the fullest expression



through the charkha. If the millions do not ply the charkha, the loss is obvious. Only a few lakhs of people can be employed by the mills. What occupation shall we provide for the hundreds of millions? This is what you have to consider. This is a supreme economic as well as moral question.

[From Hindi] Courtesy: All India Radio. Also Prarthana Pravachan—II pp. 200-2



80. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

NEW DELHI,

December 14, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

As I was coming to the prayer, I received a note saying that a Muslim friend of the writer had been forced to go away to Pakistan. The friend had left with the writer of the note some gold and silver bought with the earnings of his own labour. He wants to know how it is to be sent to its owner in Pakistan, who however has not given his name and address in Pakistan. If he furnishes the particulars I shall pass on the gold and silver to the Government to be sent to the person concerned. Till he is traced the property can remain with the Government. It is gratifying to know that notwithstanding all that has happened there are still among us Hindus and Muslims between whom fraternal feelings continue to exist and who do not covet what belongs to their friends of the other community. If everyone was like this the misfortune that has befallen us would soon be overcome.

I told you I would be reporting to you briefly whatever took place at the meetings of various Sanghs being held in the Harijan Colony. Yesterday I told you about the Charkha Sangh and its activities of spinning and weaving. I have to tell you now about village industries and Nayee Talim. I shall deal with Nayee Talim today.

Nayee Talim is not a thing with which everyone is acquainted, though the work has been going on now for seven or eight years. Nayee Talim consists in imparting all instructions through some handicrafts. The idea in a way has much deeper roots. The argument is that no education is true education unless it is founded in truth and non-violence. A man may have acquired all the learning, understood the essence of all the scriptures, may have studied Sanskrit, Arabic and Persian, but, as the Sanskrit saying (सा विद्याय विमुक्तये) goes, unless he has acquired true wisdom all his education has been in vain. By true wisdom is meant that which leads us to mukti. There are of course various kinds of mukti. There is release from the bondage of action, release from the clutches of a tyrant, release of a girl from the hands of a maniac, and liberation of the country from foreign yoke. The mukti meant here is the liberation from all the ills of the world. Education that is not rooted in truth and non-violence is no education in the proper sense of the word. There are so many instances of people who were highly learned



and yet were satanic in their pursuits. One famous instance is that of Ravana. Ravana possessed great learning and his penance too was great. And yet because his pursuits were demoniac he perished, whereas Rama lives even today. We regard Rama as a manifestation of the Supreme Lord. So in order to acquire true wealth of learning we must cultivate truth and non-violence. The discussion at the meeting centred round the question of the method of giving such education. It could not obviously be imparted through books. Then what should be done? Millions of people in the country pursue some handicraft. They cannot all be rich. Even in America everyone is not rich. True, the poverty there is of a different order but the hardships attendant on poverty are similar. In the same way various other ills widespread in India also exist there. With all their wealth and all their learning they have not been able to overcome these. I thought that if the millions were to be given education it could be done only through handicraft. If among a population of hundreds of millions a lakh or two have secured what now passes for education, what good can it do? And if everyone tried to have that education we would go bankrupt. The real system of education is one where the children of rich and poor, of king and subject, receive education through crafts. And this cannot be done unless we adhere to truth and non-violence. It becomes a question of religion here—not religion in a sectarian sense but religion in a universal sense. Such religion is eternal. It cannot change. It is for all, as much for Hindus as for Muslims. One cannot say that Hindus should speak the truth and Muslims should tell lies. It is in the interest of all to speak the truth. It is no one's religious duty to commit violence. If someone asks me whether Sikhs and Muslims may not receive Nayee Talim I shall say that if Sikhs and Muslims both declare that they are votaries of violence then certainly Nayee Talim would not be for them. Nayee Talim is not the special province of any one sect. I have studied all religions and assimilated their essence. Muslims and Sikhs both come and sit beside me. They advocate violence only where all other methods fail. But when we initiate a child into education we should begin by teaching him how to die rather than kill. We therefore decided that if we had to conduct Nayee Talim it had to be in this way. Those carrying it on must stand by truth and non-violence. Only then can it succeed. But I do not know if it is so now. I cannot read anyone's heart. I am also not a prophet. The reins of Nayee Talim are not in my hands. All I can do is to offer advice when asked. True, I conceived the idea. But the organization itself was formed by the Congress. Zakir Husain is its President. If he does not hold by truth and non-violence he should resign. But I have never known him to be guilty of falsehood or violence. He is associated with me only because he does not believe in violence. The



Secretaries of the Hindustani Talimi Sangh are Aryanayakum and his wife. They too are votaries of truth and non-violence. I am busy otherwise and they have to run the scheme. They are the moving spirit behind Nayee Talim. It is not even Zakir Saheb. He is only the President. If Aryanayakum and Asha Devi abandoned it the scheme would collapse. It is not an organization which can run on its own. Take the Congress for instance. I am of course out of it. But even if Jawaharlal, the Sardar and Rajendra Babu go out of it the Congress will go on. Or take the Charkha Sangh. I am its President. If I leave it, its work will go on, for it is an organization that has existed for many years. But that is not so with Nayee Talim. It has yet to establish itself well. It will be well established when those running it have the qualities of the sthitaprajna described in the Gita¹. We must find an activity in which everyone can participate. I want to tell you that handicrafts alone provide such activity.

[From Hindi], Courtesy: All India Radio. Also Prarthana Pravachan—II, pp. 202-4



81. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

(As Gandhiji was observing silence, his written speech was read out at the meeting.)

NEW DELHI,

December 15, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

I was pained to read in the papers that the refugees have forcibly occupied the buildings of six municipal schools and have so far resisted all attempts of the New Delhi Municipal Committee to make them vacate the buildings. The Municipality, one understands, is now seeking police help in the matter.

This episode is an instance of shameless rowdyism. In the capital city of India such happenings are a cause for great shame. I hope those responsible for this will repent and leave the school premises. If they do not, I hope their friends will try to make them see reason and the authorities will not be forced to carry out its threat. It is a general complaint against the refugees that in spite of all their tribulations they have not become sober, responsible and industrious citizens. Let us hope that the refugees in general and those who have forcibly occupied schools will repent and prove that the complaint is not justified.

On Saturday (December 12) I referred to the rowdyism in Calcutta. Those indulging in rowdyism there were not refugees. The incident had a different background too. It is the duty of all leading men, whatever their persuasion or party, to safeguard the dignity of India. India's dignity cannot be saved if misgovernment and corruption flourish. I mention corruption because misgovernment and corruption always go together. I have it from very trustworthy sources that corruption is increasing in the country. Is everyone then going to think only of himself, not at all of India?

A correspondent writes:

I have just been listening to your prayer speech of yesterday on the radio. You say some Muslims from U.P. who have been to Lahore, have assured you on behalf of the Pakistan Government that non-Muslims, and in particular Hindus, can go back there and resume their businesses. In the first place to invite only the Hindus and not the Sikhs shows cunning and is intended to create a breach between Hindus and Sikhs. Such assurances are treacherous. They are a mockery. Only persons like you can be taken in by such talk from the Muslims.



I am sending you a cutting from The Hindustan Times of December 11. It will tell you something about the sincerity and truthfulness of the Pakistan Government. Will you still say that the Muslims who come to you are honest people? All they are concerned about is to make you believe that the Pakistan Government is just to the minorities and all is well in that country, although facts speak otherwise. If those Muslim gentlemen come to you again, please show them the cutting. I am sure you will not have forgotten what befell the Hindus and Sikhs who had gone to Lahore on November 20 last to take out their valuables from the bank. The armed units escorting them were attacked in the presence of responsible Government officers of Pakistan who did nothing to stop the attackers.

The cutting says:

According to a report recently published in the Civil and Military Gazette of Lahore, non-Muslim traders and shopkeepers who had left Pakistan during the riots are coming back in the hope of resuming their trades, after an interval of months. But before they are given back the possession of their shops they are made to sign such impossible conditions that many had to go back disappointed. The Rehabilitation Commissioner has laid down the following conditions for letting people reopen their shops:

1. The proprietor or owner will keep a full account of sales.
2. He will not transfer cash or commodities from one place to another without prior permission of the Government.
3. He will give an undertaking to keep his shop as a going concern.
4. He will deposit in a bank the daily proceeds from sales.
5. He will live permanently in Lahore.

No conditions are laid down for the Muslims. Then why these conditions for the Hindus? The Hindus say they cannot abide by the conditions. So they go back disappointed.

I have already spoken of the possibility of disappointment and even if the report is accurate it does not necessarily follow that what the Muslim friends told me is false. The persons concerned have not only to think of their own position but they have to think of India, whose representatives they are, and of



Pakistan which has given them the assurances. I may say that the Muslim friends concerned keep in touch with me. They came to see me today too. But I was observing silence and writing my prayer message and so could not see them. They sent me word that they were not sitting idle but working for their mission. My advice to the correspondent is not to be so full of distrust and so sensitive. He will lose nothing by trusting. Distrust eats up a man. He should behave with discretion. For myself I can only say that I do not regret what I have done. All my life I have trusted in people with my eyes open. I shall continue to trust the Muslim friends till it is proved that they cannot be trusted. Trust begets trust. It gives one the strength to face treachery. If refugees from both sides are to go back to their homes the way for it is the way I have adopted and am following. The correspondent's suspicion that it is a trick to create a split between the Hindus and the Sikhs is wrong. I had even mentioned to the Muslim friends the possibility of their assurance being given such prejudicial construction. They denied vehemently that there was any trickery in it. I see nothing wrong in a path being paved for those wishing to return. It cannot be denied that there is more poison in Pakistan for Sikhs than for Hindus but the Hindus and Sikhs have to swim or, sink together. They should harbour no malice. Intriguers cannot have sincere amity among themselves.

A correspondent from East Pakistan says:

Now that India has been partitioned, how can you call yourself a citizen of united India? Now what belongs to one Dominion cannot belong to the other.

Whatever the legal pundits may say they cannot rule the hearts of men. Who can prevent the correspondent from saying that he is a citizen of the world? Legally that is not the case and some countries have laws that would prevent him from entering those countries. But if one has not been reduced to an automation, as some of us have not been, what does it matter to one what one's legal status is? So long as we are morally on the right path we do not have to worry. What we have to take care of is that we do not nurse enmity towards anyone or any country. For instance no one who harbours enmity towards Muslims or Pakistan can claim to be a citizen of both Pakistan and India. If such a feeling of enmity spreads it will end up in a war breaking out between the two countries. Every country will treat as traitors those of its citizens who harbour malice towards it and help a foreign country. Loyalty is indivisible.

[From Hindi], Courtesy: All India Radio. Also Prarthana Pravachan—II, pp. 204-8



82. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

NEW DELHI,

December 16, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

I am told— and to some extent it is true—that controls on certain articles of food and clothing have been removed and will be removed from more articles. There is now no doubt that controls are on the way out and Brijkishan has told me of its very first consequence. Gur, which used to be sold at Re. 1 a seer is now available at 8 [annas] a seer. This is some achievement. Of course the price should be still lower. When I was young no one could have dreamt that gur would ever become so dear. A seer of it could be had for one anna or less. We should therefore hope that the price of this commodity will further fall. No doubt we cannot have it free of cost. Similarly, sugar has come down from Rs. 32 to Rs. 20 a maund. Moong (Varieties of pulses) , urad (ibid) and arhar (ibid) are now sold at 1 and hajf_ seers for a rupee. The same is true of gram. Gram, in my opinion, is included in the pulses, but in this region it has various special uses and so it is kept separate. It used to sell at Rs. 24 a maund. Now the price is Rs. 18. The black-market price of wheat used to be Rs. 34 a maund. It is now Rs. 24. The same goes for other articles. People used to frighten me that I did not know how markets were operated, how prices rose and fell, that I did not know economics, that I was saying what I did because I was a mahatma and did not have to suffer the consequences of decontrol; it was the poor who would have to suffer. But from the first results of decontrol I see that the people will live rather than die through the measure. I shall therefore say that control on maize, barley and millet should also be lifted. Because those who are used to millet will continue to eat millet. They will not be able to digest wheat. Similarly there are many whose staple diet is maize. I thus see no reason why control on these articles should continue. Dr. Rajendra Prasad too had promised that gradually all controls would be lifted. We have seen the desirable consequences of some controls being lifted. Now take match-boxes. One has to pay an exorbitant price for a box of matches in the black-market, which is really the open market. There is no doubt that if it is decontrolled it will have a very good effect. Match-boxes never used to be so costly. In my time it cost almost nothing. Today a box of matches is sold, maybe, for one anna. Then one got a whole dozen for that price. Things were never so costly as they are now. I am happy when people's incomes rise



but the rise in prices always distresses me. If the prices rise the excess should go to the toiler, but even then prices cannot rise so steeply. This happens when traders turn wicked and greedy and want to pocket as much profit as they can. We have got our independence and we have been through a great calamity also, but still we have not learnt purity of conduct. If our traders content themselves with what is a just profit, I have not the least fear that decontrol will lead to a rise in prices. Even those who have such a fear attribute it to the fact that we are wicked and dishonest. Traders care only for their profits and the farmers and other producers too are only concerned with filling their own bellies and nobody bothers about the consumers. If that is so, how can one say that there is democracy in India? How can such things be permitted in a democracy? In a democracy it is incumbent on the Government to trust the people. It must clearly say that it will do as the people desire but that if what they desire brings them hardships it cannot be held responsible. True, we have a Civil Service, but all of us who are here should consider ourselves soldiers and serve the people. Today malpractices flourish. I am continuously receiving telegrams, etc., from everywhere. I understand there are some fishy practices going on in Bombay though I do not know exactly what. This should stop. But the people should congratulate the Government for the good work that has so far been done. It also encourages it. So much for the lifting of controls.

There is then the matter of the [Indian] Civil Service. I am receiving letters every day complaining of the expenditure still being incurred on the Civil Service. How can all I. C. S. men be removed all at once? And if they were, how would the work go on? Some have already gone and some others, who are soon to go, are having to do much hard work. The I. C. S. is in the charge of the Sardar. He praises that cadre very highly. Although they are few in number the I. C. S. men deserve to be complimented for the work they do. They no doubt receive high salaries. Still, it is we who constitute the real Civil Service. Let the Government accept us as the Civil Servants and, in order to enforce discipline, punish us as it does the Civil Servants. Let it summon any one of us and say he has to do such and such work. Is not there a law to punish those guilty of misconduct? If there is none, I shall say they should frame one. They should place on the whole people the responsibility they have placed on the Civil Service. It is after all a people's government. Why do I have to say this? Because there has been a fresh development; the Congress has said that there should be a Parliamentary Secretary attached to each Minister, and these Parliamentary Secretaries should be not from among the I. C. S. officers but from the ranks of the Congress or from among those



supporting the Congress. Of course they will not work gratis. They will have to be paid salaries. If today we did not control the Government with its immense financial resources, how could we have paid these salaries? But since we control the Government we must pay one a salary of Rs. 1,500 or Rs. 2,000, give him a house and other benefits, and call him a Parliamentary Secretary. I must say it pains me—be it a Parliamentary Secretary attached to the Prime Minister or to the Home Minister or any other Minister. Even if the Parliament—or rather the Congress Party—insists on creating such a post, does one have to work only for a salary? In that case India will become a worthless country. Was our strength born only today? Let us first produce some results. Let us sit down and assess how much we have produced in excess of what was produced till August 14. Have we produced more grain, more cloth, more industrial goods? When people become industrious, earn money and become prosperous so that they can be generous in giving, then we can say that lustre has been added to India's name and its worth has gone up. But today our per capita income is only Rs. 70. This is nothing. When this has doubled or risen even further and the rural incomes have also risen you can then ask the Government to pay more. But if our production does not increase and we go on increasing our expenditure, where shall we be? Take for instance a shop—and India is only a large shop—whose proprietor seeks from the manager an account of the sales every evening. If he is told the sale today has been worth Rs. 1,000 while yesterday it was worth only Rs. 500 he is pleased. But when he is told that the expenditure has been of the order of Rs. 1,500, he will fly into a rage and start shouting at the manager. Shouting and abusing is bad no doubt and so is getting angry, but his point is well taken. If the income is Rs. 1,000 and the expenditure Rs. 1,500, where is he to find the Rs. 500 to balance the books? Today we have the money, so we go on a spree. Tomorrow it will be gone. It therefore pains me when we throw money away so recklessly. This will do for today.

[From Hindi], Courtesy: All India Radio. Also Prarthana Pravachan—II, pp. 208-13



83. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

NEW DELHI,

December 17, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

A friend who is living in Hoshiarpur, maybe he belongs there, has asked me a number of questions. He has given his name, but I do not wish to disclose it. I shall leave his questions too. He says before the partition the Punjab was one, so that if someone had his business in one part he had his house and property in another. This friend had his business in West Punjab, while his house and property were in East Punjab. He had to flee West Punjab along with thousands of others. He thought since he had his property in East Punjab he would be able to carry on his business there. But he found on his arrival there that his house had been occupied by a Government official. He was given only two rooms, the rest being kept by the official. It would appear that it is a large house. He asks if he is not entitled to get back his house. If he does not get it back, will the Government help him or must he then go to court? In my opinion he should be given back the house. Why should litigation be forced on him? If the occupant is a Government official, it is all the more necessary for the house to be returned to its owner.

As I had occasion to mention earlier, refugees tend to occupy any vacant premises anywhere, even breaking locks where they happen to be locked. So long as someone lives as a tenant in a house and pays rent it is all right. But how can he continue to live there when the owner of the house returns to the house? He can only stay there if he arrives at some understanding with the owner, but it cannot be that he should retain the major portion of the house and the owner should become a guest in his own house. But the refugees are not in the position of tenants. All that they can say for themselves is that they have been forced out of their houses. Does it give them the right to occupy any property? If such property happens to be the house of a Muslim, then all is over. Refugees think it is theirs by right. But we can do no good either to ourselves or to India in this way. Has anyone ever done any good to himself by theft or plunder or arson? If this sort of thing goes on here, it must happen in Pakistan, too, and it will become impossible for anyone except Muslims to live in that country. I receive communications every day warning me against being taken in by sweet talk and telling me that no one except Muslims has any place in Pakistan. But if



only Muslims are left in Pakistan in the end, they will then quarrel among themselves. Whether this sort of thing goes on in Pakistan or India, it is not good. It is worse in fact if it happens in India, for we never said that India belonged to Hindus alone or that only one community could live here. Everyone who is born in India and who considers himself an Indian has a right to stay in India. Pakistan however was conceived as a homeland of Muslims. But when Pakistan became a reality on August 14 they said everyone would be able to live in Pakistan. This made me happy. What irks me is that what is said is often not implemented. And if the Hindus and Sikhs here do the same I see in it only the ruin of the two communities and of the world. No good can ever come of it.

A friend from Lahore says he had to leave his house and property against his wishes. He was forced to flee West Punjab and come here. When I advised the refugees to go back he went back. He found that his house and land were no longer his. He was given long lectures but he was not given back his property. How then could I say that the refugees should go back?

I have dealt with this question before but since he has raised it I shall say something again. I have very clearly said that the refugees should go back only when the circumstances have become more propitious. Those who would like to return, should keep themselves in readiness. First the Muslim friends who have taken the initiative in this respect have to go there. So far it is only an idea but it cannot remain only an idea indefinitely. They spoke in the name of the Pakistan Government. Or they will have to admit in the end that they have failed and that they were wrong in representing the Pakistan Government as desiring the Hindus to go back. The correspondent says that declarations are one thing and practice quite another and he wants to know whether he should go back. He has every right to ask. I must clearly say that at the moment there is no question of anyone going back. There are many people wanting to go back. I tell them that when the time comes for them to go back I shall let them know the date. I shall not ask anyone to go now. No one can really think of this at such an early stage, but it is very satisfying when these Muslim friends give this assurance. If they succeed I am sure that the present poison in the atmosphere will soon disappear. What needs to be done is to ensure that it will. For the present, however, the correspondent and others like him should keep calm. When the time comes I shall let them know. After all no one wants to go to Pakistan secretly. What I hope is that the Pakistan Government will arrange for a train which can take 5,000



people. They will go willingly and as a matter of right. They will go because they will have been invited.

There is yet another matter I must speak about and that is East Africa. You may perhaps not know that Nairobi is the most salubrious part of East Africa. It is like Simla in India. We in India have four or five months that are quite good and then we have months of severe heat, especially severe in the plains. People then want cool air and go to Simla or Darjeeling for it. India is a big country. Not so East Africa. It was the Sikhs who built Nairobi. Sikhs are very sturdy and industrious people. With great labour they built a railway in Nairobi. And yet they are debarred from Nairobi. They may go there as labourers but not as settlers and traders. So much about Nairobi. But the thing does not stop there. Once the first step is wrong, you go wrong all the way. So now they propose to enact a Bill against Indian immigration into East Africa, very much on the lines of South Africa. Attempts are being made to take away such rights as the Indians have so far enjoyed. The Bill has not yet been passed but it has been introduced in the Legislative Assembly. The Indians there have hopes from us. They have sent a communication to Pandit Nehru, who is also our Foreign Minister in addition to being our Prime Minister. They have sent him a telegram and forwarded a copy to me. They want me to say something on the matter. Since I have been in Africa they have a claim on me. I therefore take this opportunity to raise my voice. It will no doubt reach there. India is now a free country. Will free India be treated thus? Mombasa and East Africa are British territories. Will the Indians be subjected to maltreatment in a British territory? You must know that there are a large number of Indian traders there— many of them Khoja and other Muslims. There are also many Hindus. They are from all parts of India. They have also earned a lot of money through their trade with the Negroes there. They have been there since long before the British entered the area. Even Europeans had not made their entry there and if they had they were not many in number. Indians have built large mansions there. Even ships then belonged to us. Later, when our position deteriorated, we lost the ships too.

Afterwards the British and other Europeans followed. It is a long story into which I need not go. Indians lived in peace with the Negroes and did business with them. I shall not say they were always honest but certainly they did not take anything from anyone forcibly. There are no communal differences between Hindus and Muslims there. They are living in amity and harmony. They want this anti-Indian Bill to be



withdrawn. It must be withdrawn. India is a free country and I am sure Jawaharlal will do what needs to be done in this regard.

[From Hindi], Courtesy: All India Radio. Also Prarthana Pravachan—II, pp. 213-8



84. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

NEW DELHI,

December 18, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

A correspondent writes to ask why I object to English being used, but not to Urdu. The Muslims and the English are the same to us since we are friends of all. The correspondent's complaint arises out of ignorance. Not only do I not object to Urdu being used, I am its advocate. It is a provincial language like Punjabi, Marathi, Gujarati, Bengali and Oriya. There are as many languages as there are provinces in India. To be sure there are many more languages in India but scholars have selected 14 or 15 which have well-developed literatures and which are more developed than the rest. But all these 14 or 15 languages cannot be used in all the provinces. The question also is what language should serve as a link language between the provinces. Ever since I returned from South Africa I have been insisting that only a language which the largest number of Hindus and Muslims speak can be our national language. This can only be Hindustani written in the Devanagari or the Persian script. English has no place in India. The British ruled over India and so English became important. It is a foreign language, not an Indian language. Therefore I say, not reluctantly but proudly, that Urdu is an Indian language formed in India. We are all devotees of Tulsidas. You will be surprised to know that he has used any number of words of Arabic or Persian origin in his Ramayana. He just picked up words spoken in the streets and used them because Tulsidas was writing for you and me. He was not writing for the few speaking Sanskrit. The language of Tulsidas therefore is our language.

Lala Lajpatrai (January 28, 1865, - November 17, 1928); nationalist leader from the Punjab, educationist and journalist; organized a massive agrarian movement in the Punjab in 1907, and was deported to Burma; President of the Indian National Congress, 1920; died of injuries sustained during demonstration against Simon Commission) was known as the Lion of the Punjab. He is now no more. He was a friend of mine and occasionally I jokingly used to ask him when he would learn to speak in Hindi. He said that would never be. You must know that he was an Arya Samajist (2 A member of the Arya Samaj, a reformist sect of Hinduism, founded by Dayanand Saraswati) and performed havan and other rituals. As I used to stay with him I observed all this. In these rituals Sanskrit alone is used and he was able to pick a few words here and there in Devanagari. But his mother tongue was Urdu. He was a great



Urdu scholar, could write fluently in Urdu and could also deliver long orations in that language. He could also deliver long orations in English but he could never understand Sanskritized Hindi. I could make myself understood by him only when I used selected Arabic and Persian words. How then can the correspondent object to my not objecting to Urdu? I think no one should object to Urdu. English I certainly object to. I have been twice President of the Hindi Sahitya Sammelan (In March 1918 and April 1935) and I said the same thing there and no one opposed it. They in fact applauded me. I am the same man. How then can anyone suggest that I love Hindi less and am therefore less of an Indian? In my view he who objects to Urdu is to that extent less of an Indian.

Today we find ourselves in a mess and have created poison for ourselves. This is what happened in Ajmer. If you want to safeguard Hinduism you cannot do so by treating as enemies the Muslims who have stayed on in India. My days in this world are numbered. Soon I shall be gone. You will then realize that what I said was right. The same rule applies to Muslims. Islam will be dead if Muslims can tolerate only Muslims. The same goes for Christians and Christianity. All the religions of the world are good, for they teach righteousness and friendship. Those that teach enmity between men, I do not consider religions.

Even during the British rule I had said that English could not be the language of India. I love the English language. I can read and write it. Everyone knows that I am not an enemy either of the English or their language. But everything has its place. English is an international language. If we want to deal with the world outside India, we can do so only through English. English is a universal language. Hindustani has not yet acquired that universality. It is a matter of sorrow that while we have freed ourselves of English rule, we have not been able to free ourselves of the impact of English culture and the English language.

Hindustani is the language that has been formed through the blending of Hindi and Urdu like the confluence of the two rivers Ganga and Jamuna at Prayag. They share the same grammar which is the grammar of Hindustani. It has words from Sanskrit, Persian, English and various other languages. The word 'court' is as much a foreign word as 'kachehari' and there is no reason to reject the first and keep the latter. Similarly there are words like 'bicycle' and 'rail'. By what name would you like to call a rail? The fact is that so many English words have got into our speech and we do not despise them. But if the correspondent had written to me in English, I would have thrown away the letter knowing that he did know Hindustani. Similarly if I were to send



him any letter written in English he would have the right to throw it away. The matter is really quite simple but we have forgotten what is right and what is wrong. And a kind of perversity has come to lodge in us. May God protect us.

[From Hindi], Courtesy: All India Radio. Also Prarthana Prasachan—II, pp. 218-22



85. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

NEW DELHI,
December 19, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

Today I had to go to Gurgaon to see the Meos. The Meos there consist of refugees from Alwar and Bharatpur, besides those who are natives of the place. The East Punjab Premier Dr. Gopichand Bhargava accompanied me. He told the Meos that those of them who wanted to stay could stay on. The Government would protect them. That hundreds of thousands had to leave their houses and properties in Pakistan was something barbarous. It was also a barbarous thing that people had to leave their houses and properties here. One cannot go into who committed more barbarities because such a discussion cannot end the enmity that has been generated. It should not be our fate to be eternal enemies of each other. It will only end in our ruin. I have said that I cannot tolerate this. Those who have made up their minds to go will certainly go but no one will be forced to go. There are men and women there in large numbers. All of them are in distress. Many of them do not even have tents to shelter them and the days are so cold. It is a tragic sight. The Alwar State should admit its mistake and invite them back. The Bharatpur State should do the same. One cannot say that Meos are a criminal tribe. Who can say who is a criminal and who is not? And will you exile those who are criminals? Will you kill them? This will never happen. You have to reform them and educate them and show them the ways of civilized behaviour.

My second topic today is sugar. Sugar is not produced everywhere. It has to be transported from the places where it is produced. If we do not have sugar here we have to bring it from the U. P. or Coimbatore, but how to do it? It can only be brought in railway wagons, but there are no wagons available. Dr. John Matthai who is in charge of the Railways is helpless. He says all the wagons are already in use and are being fully utilized. Then there is a shortage of coal and iron and of staff. Also the producers of sugar keep on raising prices and after all it cannot be carried on one's head. But though there is a shortage of railway wagons there is motor transport. A motor-truck runs as fast as a train and it does not require steel rails on which to ply. But motor transport requires petrol and petrol is still a controlled article. If the control over petrol is lifted the trucks and lorries will start plying more easily and haul goods from one place to another. The movement of salt can also become more smooth. It is paradoxical that



we produce so much salt and there is no tax on it anymore, and yet it is so costly. That is because supplies do not arrive. In my view it has been a mistake to appoint contractors for producing and supplying salt. If petrol is decontrolled trucks can be used for carrying salt and several other things. It does not seem right to decontrol certain articles and continue control over others. When we have adopted decontrol as a policy we must pursue it fully and see what happens. You cannot say there is no petrol in the market. Black-market is flourishing in petrol and it will continue to flourish so long as the control over it is not lifted. I am told that corruption has also increased, that it is necessary to grease the palm of the petroleum officer and it is not a question of a rupee or two but of hundreds of rupees. Petrol is required only by those who run motor transport. The Government should retain what petrol it needs for itself and release the rest to be sold in the open market. Of course even if petrol should become virtually extinct and trains should become immobilized, the country's affairs will not stop. Only the mode of transport will be changed. We will revert to old ways. I have therefore no fears from the control over petrol being lifted.

We do not produce enough food grain for ourselves. We may tell people to cultivate whatever land they have but for this one is told that fertilizers are required for the import of which we have to spend crores of rupees. The fertilizers cause erosion of the soil. This is not what I say. It is what those who know the subject say. Mirabehn has been doing this work. She convened a conference of experts (The All India Compost Conference; vide "Compost Manure", 21-12-1947.) Some very important people were with her in this. There was Rajendra Babu and Sir Datar Singh and various others who knew something about the subject. The conclusions of the Conference are in the newspapers. It recommended ways to make compost and what is called organic manure. We have dung in plenty; then there are also human faeces which can make very good manure. After it is converted into compost nobody can say how it was made. If you take it in hand it has a pleasant smell, not an unpleasant one. In making compost they also mix grass, leaves and other farmyard waste with the dung and in time it is converted into very good manure. The Conference also passed many resolutions but the substance was that we should all work hard at agriculture and grow four maunds where only one maund grew before. Mirabehn has left today. She lives in Rishikesh near Hardwar. She intends to carry on this work there. I thought I would tell you about this so that you can make what use you can of the information.

[From Hindi], Courtesy: All India Radio. Also Prarthana Pravachan—II, pp. 222-6



86. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

NEW DELHI,

December 20, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

It is a matter of grief that there has been rioting again in Delhi. It has been of a minor nature, but still it is regrettable. If it is our wish that Muslims should leave India, we should say so clearly or the Government may declare that it will not be safe for Muslims to continue to live in India. Or we should all tell them that rather than be killed off slowly in riots, it would be better for them to go. But if we do so I see in it the doom of Hinduism and Sikhism. Likewise it will be the doom of Islam if Pakistan decides that no Hindus and Sikhs may live there. There are not very many Muslims left in India. We have already expelled a large number. They did not go voluntarily. They were compelled to leave. I wish we could become brave and noble and courageous. It is only a coward who will say that a Muslim may not stay in India. Why can't a Muslim stay in India? If he is bad he must be reformed—not through violence but by persuasion. Why have we come to this pass that Hindus and Sikhs should live in fear in Pakistan and Muslims should live in fear in India? And yet we make the tall claims that everyone can live in our country in peace. I tell the Government that they must see that our promises are fulfilled. The army, the police and the officials have all become good. If we behave decently we can make progress. If not, the reins of power that have come into our hands will slip away.

I have not yet told you all that happened at the meeting of the Charkha Sangh. The charkha is the pivot of the village industries. If the charkha does not play in the seven lakh villages of India the other village industries cannot flourish. The charkha is the sun while the other village industries are the planets revolving around it. If the sun should become extinct the planets cannot go on, for they depend on the sun. For India the sun is the wheel which you can see enshrined in the flag. It does not matter whether you see it as the Sudarshan Chakra [of Krishna] or the Dharma Chakra of Ashoka. In my eyes it is the symbol of the spinning-wheel. If that charkha goes on in the villages of India other village industries will also go on. But we shall have to see that they go on, because if they decline the charkha also will decline. There are many villages around Delhi. The villages supplied so many things. Today all those things are not procurable. Perhaps you do not know, although you should, that Delhi was full of



Muslim craftsmen. They have all left. Look at Panipat. There were many Muslims there, weaving blankets and making such other things. Today their trade is ruined. If Muslim craftsmen leave India it is India's loss. What is the reason for our fighting in Kashmir? I consider it barbarous for the tribal raiders to have attacked Kashmir; we had to send an army to fight them.

Yesterday I told you that Mirabehn had taken up the work of compost-making and that the Government was helping her. We can all carry on this work in our homes. We can collect human waste, cow-dung and vegetable waste—which mix beautifully and turn out to be an excellent manure - smelling good.

The work of the Village Industries and the Charkha Sangh can go on only if the masses take it up. All the four organizations, namely, the Charkha Sangh, the Harijan Sevak Sangh, the Gramodyog Sangh and the Talimi Sangh had been formed for the masses, not for the rich. Everyone should cooperate in the work of these bodies. If we want true democracy to be established in India, we must all co-operate in furthering that work. It is only the people who can make a success of any work. The people provide the foundation on which alone we can raise a structure of any height. But if we only continue our internecine strife we shall meet with the same fate as the Yadavas did. Krishna, you will remember, belonged to the Yadava clan and yet because they strayed from the right path they took to drinking, debauchery and fighting among themselves. The result was that they met with a sad end. If we want that India should avoid that fate we should all take in hand the activities pursued by the four organizations I have mentioned.

[From Hindi], Courtesy: All India Radio. Also Prarthana Pravachan—II, pp. 226-9



87. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

(As Gandhiji was observing silence, this was read out at the meeting.)

NEW DELHI,

December 22, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

Some eight or ten miles from here, at Mehrauli, there is a shrine of Qutubuddin Bakhtiyar Chisti. Esteemed as second only to the shrine at Ajmer, it is visited every year not only by Muslims but by thousands of non-Muslims too. Last September this shrine was subjected to the wrath of Hindu mobs. The Muslims living in the vicinity of the shrine for the last 800 years had to leave their homes. I mention this sad episode to tell you that, though Muslims love the shrine, today no Muslim can be found anywhere near it. It is the duty of the Hindus, Sikhs, the officials and the Government to open the shrine again and wash off this stain on us. The same applies to other shrines and religious places of Muslims in and around Delhi. The time has come when both India and Pakistan must unequivocally declare to the majorities in each country that they will not tolerate desecration of religious places, be they small or big. They should also undertake to repair the places damaged during riots.

Muslims have asked me whether, in view of the decision of the Muslim League in Karachi (The Council of the All-India Muslim League had passed a resolution in Karachi on December 15, bifurcating the Muslim League into two bodies —one for Pakistan and the other for India.), members of the Muslim League should take part in the Conference called by Maulana Azad in Lucknow (The Indian Union Muslims' Conference was scheduled to be held in Lucknow on December 27 and 28 under the presidentship of Abul Kalam Azad. Members of the Provincial Assemblies, the Constituent Assembly and various Muslim organizations had been invited to attend it.) and also whether Muslims might participate in the Conference of the Muslim League in Madras, and in any case what should be the course to be adopted by the members of the Muslim League in India. I have not the least doubt that if they receive a personal or public invitation they should attend the Conferences in Lucknow and Madras. They should fearlessly and openly declare their views at these meetings. If they have learnt anything from the 30 years of non-violent struggle they should not worry that they are in a minority in the Indian Union and that the majority in Pakistan can be of no help to them. It does not need belief in non-violence to see that a minority however small it may be has no reason to feel afraid for its honour and for the things



it holds dear. If man could but know his Maker and realize that he himself is a reflection of that Maker, no power on earth can take away his self-respect. No one can take away my self-respect; I can only lose it. During my struggle against the mighty Government of the Transvaal, a dear English friend of mine in Johannesburg used to tell me, “I always like to be with a minority, for a minority as a rule does not commit mistakes, and even if it does it can be rectified. But a majority is drunk with power and it is difficult to reform it.” If by majority the friend also meant one-sided armed might he was right. We know from bitter experience how a handful of Englishmen had transformed themselves into a majority through force of arms and how they dominated the whole of India. India lacked arms and, even if the arms had been there, we did not know how to use them. It is a matter of regret that Hindus and Sikhs have not learnt a lesson from the British rule in our country. The Muslims of the Union suffered from false pride in their majority in the East and the West. Today they are rid of that burden. If they now see the virtues of being a minority they will show the beauties of Islam in their own way. They must remember that the best days of Islam were the days of the Prophet Mohammed’s minority in Mecca. Christianity began to decline after the time of Constantine (Emperor of Rome; 306 A. D. to 337 A. D.; who made Christianity the State religion). I do not want to prolong the argument here. My advice emanates from my faith and if Muslim friends do not have this faith they are free to reject it.

In my view they should all be prepared to join the Congress. But they must not apply for entry into that body till they are sure of a hearty welcome and equality of treatment. In principle there is no question of majority and minority so far as the Congress is concerned. The Congress follows no religion unless it be a religion of humanity. It treats men and women alike. It is a purely political body in which Sikhs, Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Parsees and Jews are all equal. The Congress has not always been able to practise what it preached. This sometimes created an impression among the Muslims that it was a caste Hindu organization. In any case as long as this kind of tug of war goes on Muslims should keep away with dignity. When the Congress wants their services they should come into the Congress. Till then they can be servants of the Congress as I am a servant of the Congress. Although I am not a four-anna member of the Congress I have a voice in that organization, and that is because ever since 1915 when I returned from South Africa I have been loyally serving the Congress. If every Muslim similarly serves the Congress he will find that his services are similarly appreciated.



Today every Muslim is considered a supporter of the League and therefore an enemy of the Congress. This has been the unfortunate result of the teachings of the League. Today there is no cause left any more for enmity. Four months are a very short time for getting rid of the poison of communalism. It is the misfortune of India that Hindus and Sikhs took this poison to be nectar and made themselves the enemies of the Muslim League. In returning brickbat for brickbat they brought a stain to their name and put themselves in the same category as Muslims. I appeal to the Muslim minority to raise themselves above this poisonous atmosphere, to remove the suspicion that had been created concerning them and to show that they could live in India as her honourable citizens without any deceit and dissimulation.

One consequence of partition is that the League cannot continue as a political organization. The Hindu Mahasabha, the Sikh Sabha and the Parsee Sabha similarly cannot continue as political bodies. They may well stay as religious bodies. Their task then will be internal reform of society, to search for things of religious value and to act on them. Then the atmosphere will become free of poison and these organizations will rival each other in doing good. They will have amity for each other and they will help the Government. Their political ambitions can be realized through the Congress alone whether they are in the Congress or not. If the Congress thinks only of those who are in the Congress it will become very narrow in its sphere of service. Even today there are very few people in the Congress. If no other organization can rival the Congress it is because the Congress has been trying to represent the whole of India, because it has dedicated itself to the service of the poorest and the lowliest.

[From Hindi], Prarthana Pravachan—II pp. 229-32



88. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

NEW DELHI,

December 23, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

A friend suggests that since it is getting cold we should begin our prayer half an hour earlier, that is, at 5 p. m. I admit it is getting pretty cold. Though the days will be getting longer minute by minute from now on, for today it is already the 23rd of December, still if all of you so wish we can begin the prayer at 5 p.m. from tomorrow. (Gandhiji asked those who wanted the prayers to be held earlier to raise their hands. A large number of them raised their hands. It was, therefore, decided to hold the prayers at 5 p. m.) Today I shall deal with three points.

Here is the first. You saw that yesterday people (Who carried placards reading “Save the 70,000 Hindus and Sikhs of Bahawalpur”) arrived here from Bahawalpur. They are in great distress. (3 In the State of Bahawalpur, which had acceded to Pakistan on November 8, seventy thousand Hindus and Sikhs were awaiting evacuation. It was reported that the Pakistan authorities were not agreeing to their evacuation through the Military Evacuation Organization. The Hindus and Sikhs concentrated in camps were without adequate food or clothing.) They say that all the Hindus and Sikhs there should be brought here for their lives are in danger. Today two friends from Bahawalpur came to see me. They said that if no steps were taken in this respect they would go and fast in front of the Governor-General’s house. I told them that their fasting could neither bring here the Hindus and Sikhs left behind nor ensure their safety. That besides the Governor-General had no power except such as he derived from his Cabinet. He merely affixed his signature. If they thought that fasting before the residence of Pandit Nehru or the Sardar would do any good they were equally mistaken. They saw the point and gave up the idea of fasting. Yesterday I was observing silence and so could not say anything. The Nawab of Bahawalpur should permit all the Hindus and Sikhs to go wherever they want to. If he does not he will be failing in his duty. I cannot relate to you the things that have happened there under the very nose of the Nawab. A large number of Hindus and Sikhs were tortured and killed. It is the Sikhs who built Bahawalpur. They are brave people. They can fight and cultivate land. They have been cultivating the land there; so have the Hindus. They have committed no crime. Their only crime is that they are Hindus or Sikhs. A large number of these innocent people were murdered and some ran away. When Hindus



and Sikhs cannot live there in peace, what is the worth of anything that the Nawab may say? I appeal to the Nawab that he should do his duty. If Hindus and Sikhs cannot live there in honour he should arrange for them to leave or he should declare that none of the Hindus and Sikhs still in Bahawalpur will be touched and that they can continue to live in Bahawalpur in peace. If they are starving, food should be made available to them.

According to a report in today's Statesman about the refugee camps in Lahore, the Muslims in the camps are living in insanitary conditions. Epidemics like cholera and smallpox have broken out and even those who have escaped them are dying of cold and exposure. How can people live under the open sky in this cold? They need shelter and clothes and food. If these three things are not available they must face death. I do not know all that is happening there. Yes, scavengers have been brought over from Sialkot who will clean the camps and remove nightsoil. The officials say that they are not doing enough work. It is clear that the people there are in distress. What does it matter that they are in Pakistan? Why should human beings be so degraded? It pains me. Those people who ran away from here to escape our excesses were deprived of their hearths and homes. They are not familiar with the surroundings there and they have to suffer hardships. But why can't they keep themselves clean? I should advise all the refugees, be they in India or in Pakistan, that they should not be dependent on others for everything. They should not ask for help to cook for them or to remove their night-soil. People who were being uprooted from their homes are in no position to make such demands. It's a privilege of the rich. They may employ ten when one is enough, but not we. These are the symptoms of our degradation. The refugees in the camps in Lahore should firmly and courageously declare that they will not have scavengers from Sialkot, that they will themselves do the cleaning of their camps. The Pakistan Government and the officials concerned should also make it clear to the refugees that they will not have scavengers brought from Sialkot. They should at least do what every human being can do. And if even then there are deaths, that will be a different matter. I have said it before, and I say it again, that the refugees should conduct themselves with decency. They should do all that they can do and not become a burden on others.

And here is something good that I want to tell you. I told you once that Pyarelal had come here. You know who Pyarelal is. He is my Secretary. He had been working in Noakhali for a long time. There were others with him too. At the risk of their lives they



gave support and courage to the Hindus who felt insecure there. The Muslims too very soon understood that they were their friends and servants and had gone there not to promote violence but to promote amity between the two communities.

Pyarelal has some interesting news from Noakhali: A temple had been demolished and occupied by Muslims. It became a cause of strife. Later when the Muslims expressed their desire to live in amity with the Hindus, Pyarelal pointed out that the Hindus no longer had the temple where they could go and worship. The Muslims thereupon rebuilt the temple with their own labour and assured the Hindus that they were free to go to the temple and offer worship. Now they are all happy. The officials too co-operated. If everyone in India and Pakistan acted in this spirit the faces of the two countries would change. If we stick to our own religion and refrain from interfering with another's, it will be a great thing.

[From Hindi], Courtesy: All India Radio. Also Prarthana Pravachan—II, pp. 236-8



89. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

NEW DELHI,

December 24, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

I often receive Sikh visitors. I also read newspapers sometimes. They say that I have proved an enemy of the Sikhs. They would not have minded it much but for the fact that my word seemed to carry weight with the world outside India where it is believed that India has secured its freedom through non-violent means. This had never happened before anywhere in the world. But a tree is known by its fruit, and by no other means. For man is not God, man can know a thing from its results. The fruit of independence has been that today Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs have become one another's enemies.

As I have admitted earlier I had been under the delusion that our struggle was truly non-violent. God had rendered me blind and I was misled. Because the lame, the crippled, the coward cannot be non-violent. Lame, crippled and dumb I do not mean literally, for God helps these and they are always non-violent. Even a child can stand before the world on the strength of non-violence. Prahlad was an instance. We do not know whether Prahlad was a historical character. To me he was more than a historical character, for I believe in the story. Prahlad's father (Hiranyakashipu, the Demon-king) commanded him not to utter the name of God. But Prahlad insisted that he would continue to utter the name of God. The image of 12-year-old Prahlad remains before my eyes. Therefore I say that those who are lame and crippled at heart can never be truly non-violent. So long as the light does not shine in the heart no one can understand the beauty of non-violence. What we offered during the struggle was passive resistance which simply meant that we would not kill the British though in our hearts we wanted to kill them. But we had not the power. When the millions took up passive resistance it did bring about our freedom. The freedom we have obtained is crippled freedom. It is only partial. I therefore laugh when I see our Sikh brethren getting angry. In my eyes there is no difference between the Hindus and the Sikhs. I have read the Granthsaheb. A friend chides me for not knowing anything about the Granthsaheb. He says I cannot understand the Sikhs and that if I did, I would not have written what I wrote about Guru Govind Singh. That was many years ago and the mistake was not mine. But he still says so because he is a friend. If I say that the Sikhs



are taking to drinking and gambling it does not mean that it applies to all or only to Sikhs. Hindus too are a prey to these evils but Hindus do not have the strength that the Sikhs have. The Sikhs should not use that strength indiscriminately. They may wield the sword but only where they must. Their sword should not fall where it ought not to fall. I am a true friend of the Sikhs when I say that anyone who commits crimes or is guilty of bad conduct sins before God. He degrades his religion.

Today is the 24th. Tomorrow is Christmas. Christmas is to Christians what Diwali is to us. Really neither Diwali nor Christmas is an occasion when we should indulge in revelry and lose our heads. I do not regard Christmas as an occasion for people to indulge in drunkenness. Christmas reminds one of Jesus Christ. I offer greetings to the Christians in India and abroad. May the New Year bring them prosperity and happiness. It has never been my wish that the freedom of India should mean the ruin of the Christians here or that they should become Hindus or Muslims or Sikhs. For a Christian to become a Hindu or a Muslim is a fate worse than death. According to my view a Christian should become a better Christian, a Muslim a better Muslim and a Sikh a better Sikh. I want that all the Christians in and outside India should become free in the true sense. Let them exercise self-restraint and pursue the path of sacrifice and martyrdom shown by Jesus Christ. Let them be free and increase the area of freedom in the world. I see from the papers that the Government proposes to stop the grants made to them. The money they receive from America and England will also stop coming. It is feared that 75% of the churches in India will have to be closed down. But a religion does not prosper with the help of money. Most Christians in India are poor people. What does it matter if the Government help should stop? They should be glad that they will now be free of the curse of pecuniary assistance. Once a lot of money and presents came into the house of Hazarat Omar. This worried Omar and he told his wife that with all that wealth he was no longer certain if he would be able to retain his self-control and would not take pleasure. A church does not need a building. The human body is the real church. It is there that God dwells. Then we have the sky for the roof and the earth for the floor. We can utter God's name anywhere. I shall therefore say that the Christians need not feel worried. They do not really need assistance from the Government or anyone. They should follow the teachings of their religion. If they but persevere in the path of sacrifice shown by Christ, no one can take their religion away from them.

[From Hindi]; Courtesy: All India Radio. Also Prarthana Pravachan—II, pp. 236-8



90. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

NEW DELHI,

December 25, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

You all know something of what is happening in Kashmir. But I want to draw your attention to a proposal about Kashmir. It is being said and also reported in the newspapers that we should invite someone to arbitrate between the Indian Union and Pakistan in the dispute over Kashmir. How can this be? How long can this kind of thing go on? Instead of resulting in a settlement of the dispute, this will merely introduce into it a third party. Can we not settle the issue between ourselves? There is a large preponderance of Muslims in Kashmir. Maybe they are more than 95%. Jammu does not have very many Muslims. I do not know what is the percentage of Muslims in the population but Jammu and Kashmir is one State. It cannot be partitioned. If we start the process of partitioning where is it going to end? It is enough and more than enough that India has been partitioned into two. If we partition Kashmir, why not other States?

What is the nature of the dispute in Kashmir? It is said that the raiders are outsiders. They are aggressors and plunderers. But as time passes it looks as if it was not so. I get some Urdu newspapers. I can read Urdu a little myself and others also read them out to me. Today some bits from the Zamindar were read out to me. I know the editor (Maulana Zafar Ali Khan) of the Zamindar. He has an unbridled tongue. He has issued an open invitation to all Muslims to muster for an assault on Kashmir. He has heaped abuse on the Dogras and the Sikhs. He calls the raid in Kashmir a jihad (Crusade or war waged for a holy cause). But there is always restraint about a jihad. There is nothing of the kind here. Do they want that Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims should perpetually remain divided? What is our duty if Muslims start cutting up the Hindus and Sikhs? As I have been telling you every day Hindus and Sikhs must not retaliate.

The simple fact is that Pakistan has invaded Kashmir. Units of the Indian army have gone to Kashmir but not to invade Kashmir. They have been sent on the express invitation of the Maharaja and Sheikh Abdullah. Sheikh Abdullah is the real Maharaja of Kashmir. Muslims in their thousands are devoted to him. He is called the Lion of Kashmir.



One should always admit one's mistakes. The Hindus and Sikhs of Jammu or those who had gone there from outside killed Muslims there. The Maharaja of Kashmir is responsible for the happenings in his State. It was not Sheikh Abdullah who was behind these murders. He in fact went to Jammu and tried to reason with the Hindus and Sikhs. He tried to save the lives of Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs. The Maharaja of Kashmir is a Dogra Rajput. Abuses have been heaped on him. If he has been at fault he can be removed. One can understand that. But what have the Muslims of Kashmir done?

Why is jihad being carried on against them? I want to say to the Government of Pakistan in all humility that if their claim to being the greatest Islamic power in the world is true, they should make sure that every Hindu and every Sikh in Pakistan is justly treated. They should be protected. But Pakistan presents a different picture. I shall advise Pakistan and India to sit together and decide the matter. If the two are interested in the settlement of the dispute, where is the need for an arbitrator? The Maharaja can step aside and let India and Pakistan deliberate over the matter. Sheikh Abdullah will of course be there. If they want an arbitrator they can appoint one from among themselves, but it should certainly not be a third power. They may, if they so desire, persuade the Maharaja to step down. After all he is a human being. A large number of Muslims have been killed there and Muslim women have been dishonoured. I met the Maharaja and his Prime Minister. And I told him what I had to say. The Maharaja should clearly say that he is no longer the Ruler, it is the Muslims of Kashmir who are the real rulers and they may do what they like. After the Maharaja and his Prime Minister withdrew themselves only Sheikh Abdullah will remain. He can form an interim government and restore law and order. The armies can be withdrawn. If the two countries arrive at a settlement on these lines it will be good for both. It is not that India had invaded a Muslim State or had gone there to help the Maharaja. Our Government is for the people and it is in the interest of the people that we enter into negotiations with the Princes. The Congress Government can take no other course.

I saw a couplet in an Urdu magazine today. It hurt me. I do not remember the words but the substance is this: "Today Somnath is on the tongue of everyone. If the temple is renovated it will have to be avenged. A new Ghazni must come from Ghazni to avenge what happened in Junagadh." It is painful to think that such a thing can issue from the pen of a Muslim. I have said that I must do or die; which means that I shall



either bring about Hindu-Muslim amity or lay down my life. This sort of thing cannot affect my resolve. I cannot return evil for evil. I can only return good for evil. I tell you all this so that you may not be taken in by such things. You must not remember the wrong that Ghaznavi did. Muslims should realize and admit the wrongs perpetrated under the Islamic rule. The Hindu and Sikh rulers of Kashmir and Patiala, etc., should also admit the excesses committed in their States. There is nothing to be ashamed of in confessing one's sins, it only lightens one's guilt. If Muslims in the Indian Union teach their children that a Ghaznavi must come to avenge them and destroy the Hindus, who is going to tolerate this? If this mischievous couplet had not been published in an important magazine I would not even have mentioned it. (The couplet appeared under the title "Mahmud Ghaznavi" in Aligarh Urdu Magazine published from the Aligarh University. When the attention of Nawab Mohammad Ismail Khan, the Vice-Chancellor, was drawn to it, he sent a letter expressing regret for the oversight.)

[From Hindi]; Courtesy: All India Radio. Also Prarthana Pravachan—II, pp. 239-41



91. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

NEW DELHI,

December 26, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

I am happy and also sorry to announce that we shall not be having our prayer here tomorrow. Instead I shall be going to Sambhal, where a village panchayat has been formed. It is thought that because of my visit a large number of people will gather there. We shall have the prayer there. I have never been to that village before. They say the distance is about 11 miles, maybe a mile less or more. We shall of course have our prayer the day after tomorrow.

Today I wish to tell you about the Tibbia College. Both Hindu and Muslim students joined it for studying Ayurveda which was taught there. Later, courses in Yunani, allopathy and homoeopathy were added. Hakim Ajmalkhan was the founder of the college. He was a popular leader of Delhi. Today we have made ourselves enemies of Muslims. It was not so when we thought of starting this college where everyone irrespective of communal considerations could study medicine. All contributed freely. Among the donors were Hindu Rajas and Muslim Nawabs. The late Dr. Ansari worked hard to make the scheme a success. It was under the management of a Trust which had on its board Hindus and Muslims. Today some Hindu friends came to me and asked what would happen to the college now. They said it was difficult to continue it under the present circumstances. Funds had ceased to come. It would be a matter of grief and shame if such a large institution had to close down. I am trying my best to avoid this calamity. The college is situated in Karol Bagh. But Muslim boys fear to go anywhere near it. We have driven out Muslims from Panipat. It is still a moot question where they will be able to live. It is a matter of shame for us. It seems that we are doing our best to ruin ourselves. For, when we try to ruin others we ruin ourselves. This is the rule of life.

Another matter I wish to speak about is that of abducted girls. I spoke on the matter once. (Vide "Speech at Prayer Meeting", 7-12-1947.) But I must speak again and again, for only then will the people understand. It is not a question of a mere ten or twenty girls. The number could be in hundreds or even thousands. Nobody knows. Where are all those girls? Muslims have abducted Hindu and Sikh girls. We want to recover them.



In Lahore some Hindu, Muslim and Sikh women met and decided to have these abducted girls recovered and restored to their homes. They decided that Muslim girls carried away by Hindus and Sikhs should also be returned. I have received a long list of girls abducted from Patiala. Some of them come from very well-to-do Muslim families. When they are recovered it will not be difficult for them to be returned to their parents. As regards Hindu girls it is still doubtful whether they will be accepted by their families. This is very bad. If a girl has lost her parents or husband it is not her fault. And yet Hindu society does not look upon such a girl with respect any more. The mistake is ours, not the girl's. Even if the girl has been forced into marriage by a Muslim, even if she has been violated, I would still take her back with respect. I do not want that a single Hindu or Sikh should take up the attitude that if a girl has been abducted by a Muslim she is no longer acceptable to society. We should not hate her. We should sympathize with her and take pity on her. If a girl is a Sikh, in my eyes she remains a Sikh, if a Hindu, she remains a Hindu. If my daughter has been violated by a rascal and made pregnant, must I cast her and her child away? Nor can I take the position that the child so born is Muslim by faith. Its faith can only be the faith of the mother who bore it. After the child grows up he or she will be free to take up any religion. Today we are in such an unfortunate situation that some girls say that they do not want to come back, for they know that if they return they will only face disgrace and humiliation. The parents will tell them to go away, so will the husbands. I have suggested that a sort of home should be established for such girls which should take up the responsibility for their food and shelter and education, so that they can stand on their own feet. These girls are innocent. The culprits are those, be they Hindus or Muslims or Sikhs, who have abducted them. Let the Hindus and Sikhs who have abducted Muslim girls return them. Let the Muslims who have abducted Hindu and Sikh girls return them. And let them confess publicly that they are guilty. The list I have received makes me tremble. What has happened in Kashmir? A large number of Muslims have been slaughtered. Women have been slaughtered and young girls have been abducted. If my voice can reach those guilty of this outrage, I shall ask them to return all those girls. I am told that several hundred Hindu and Sikh girls had similarly been carried away. I am also told that a certain pir (A Muslim saint) is holding in his house a large number of Hindu and Sikh girls. Those who have abducted them are reported to have said that they do not mean to harm or dishonour these girls in any way but that they will not return them so long as the abducted Muslim girls are not returned. This will be a wicked bargain. We should not act in such a way. We should behave like



decent men. We must return all the abducted girls without any preconditions. If we want to retain our freedom we must learn decency of conduct.

[From Hindi]; Courtesy: All India Radio. Also Prarthana Pravachan, II, pp. 241-3



92. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

SAMBHAL,

December 27, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

It gives me special pleasure to hold a prayer meeting in this village. You should not thank me or give me an address of welcome or garland me. Prayer is our dharma. We pray when we get up in the morning. We should pray regularly morning and evening. In the evening at 5, or earlier in winter, we can have congregational prayer. We must utter God's name when we stand or sleep or eat. We must also remember God when at work. We should not give ourselves to selfish pursuits. We must pursue the path of service. I have too little time now to explain to you the whole significance of prayer.

Though, as I have told you, I want no addresses of welcome and garlands, still since you have given me these I thank you for the honour. You speak in your address of the greatness of truth and non-violence. But if our conduct is not in conformity with truth and non-violence, talking of them is hypocritical. I do not like this. Ever since I came to India from South Africa I had been travelling all over the country. I have traversed India many times and seen thousands of villages. People talk of truth and non-violence but they do not act accordingly. They think in one way, speak in another and act in yet another way. It is a matter of shame for us that in India Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs should be slaughtering one another. Mercifully there have been no riots here in and around your village because the number of Muslims here is small and they can do no harm. If we want to behave as enemies of one another, let us at any rate stop talking of ahimsa. Let us be truthful to this extent. We have not become free in order to slaughter one another. Freedom means that we should voluntarily do what is good. We have become free to do good, not to do evil. We never pray to God to let us utter falsehoods. If we do that it would be surrender to Satan.

It is a good thing you have formed a panchayat. But if it does not function properly and is a panchayat only in name, it will do no good. In former times there used to be real panchayats in the villages of India. I have not even seen them. But travellers from China and Greece have reported about them. These travellers were not paid by anyone. They were not even invited. They came on their own undergoing great hardships. They came in order to gain knowledge. They write that there were at the



time no thefts anywhere in India; there were no locks on the doors. All this was not what happened thousands of years ago. Our history does not go back thousands of years.

Formerly there were four varnas (Viz., Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra) Today these have grown into a large number. It becomes meaningless to call them varnas. It is a great responsibility you have assumed in forming a panchayat. The cows yield so little milk that many people say that they should be slaughtered. Muslims no doubt slaughter cows. But no one in the world slaughters as many cows as the Hindus do. Hindus do not treat the cows well. They do not know how to look after them. This amounts to slowly killing the cows. It is much better to kill them all at once. We worship cows and yet treat them most cruelly. I shall say your panchayat has done something if at the end of the year the cows that today give three seers of milk give six.

Similarly you should produce twice the present amount of food grain. You can do so by giving to the land the nourishment that it needs. Mirabehn had called a conference which was attended by a large number of people. They came to the conclusion that all the cow-dung, human faeces and vegetable-waste available in villages could be turned into rich manure. It requires not expenditure but a little labour and it increases the fertility of the soil.

I do not know how clean you keep your village. But it is your paramount duty to make yourselves strong. You must keep yourselves clean externally and internally. Your village should be free of dirt and dung in every way. And it should be free from foul smells. You should follow the rules of sanitation.

Why do you need a cinema here? Instead of this, you can perform the various plays and stage dramas known to us. The cinema will only make you spend money. Then you will also learn to gamble and fall into other evil habits. Those addicted to alcohol, ganja (Hemp) and bhang (Hemp flowers) should give up these addictions. Then I shall feel that your Panchayat has done some good work. Then people will come from Delhi to see your village. You must forget untouchability. If you will realize that Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and Parsis are all brothers you will show what free India means. May God give you the strength to accomplish all this.

Please do not clap your hands. What I have said is a part of the prayer. I want your blessings and if you do all that I have told you, you will have given me all I need.

[From Hindi]; Courtesy: All India Radio. Also Prarthana Pracachan—II pp. 243-6



93. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

NEW DELHI,
December 28, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

Today I was at a meeting of cloth merchants (Vide the preceding item.), where they told me that cloth too should be decontrolled as so many other things had been. I have no doubt that control on cloth should be lifted. You will see from the papers what happened at the meeting. One thing the traders told me was that, even without the control on cloth being lifted, the prices of cloth had begun to decline. The reason, they say, is that now my voice is raised for decontrol and the Government listens to me, and hence it is expected that cloth will soon be decontrolled. This has led to the hoarded cloth being brought out into the open market and so the prices have registered a decline. The same was the case with sugar. People tell me that wherever one goes one sees large stocks of sugar. It is being sold at one rupee a seer. I am told that people are even able to bargain and buy it for 15 as. or even 14 as. I am receiving telegrams from all quarters reporting much relief among people as a consequence of decontrol. Blessings are showered on me for having brought about decontrol. But it is not I who should be blessed, but the masses, for it is their voice that I have taken up. And that is why my voice was heard, otherwise who would listen to me? My own voice counts for nothing.

I say we should not treat Muslims as enemies. But people turn away from me. They say I am mad. I must say that if the masses do not listen to me they will be doing harm to their dharma. I say nothing improper. Tulsidas says that compassion is the essence of religion. You may say that Tulsidas was mad but no other book is as popular in the country as his Ramayana. It is not only in Bihar or in Delhi where it is popular, it is read everywhere. I only repeated what Tulsidas said. Why then do they say that I am mad?

I don't understand the control over firewood. It is not something you can eat. If it is freely available, will anyone eat it or burn it all up? They will burn only as much as is necessary. Why then should there be control over it? I shall not be satisfied till control on firewood is lifted. Today it has become so scarce that the poor suffer.



People ask me to press for decontrol of petrol also. I must say that control over petrol should be lifted and the sooner the better. We shall only gain thereby. There will be more motor vehicles on the roads which will only be for the good of the masses. Of course if there were more trains plying there would be no need for so much petrol. But laying more railway lines involves expenditure running into crores. We must make the best use of what we have. We have for the present all the railways we need. There are enough roads for going from one place to another. Only there is no petrol. What we need today is not rail transport but motor transport. I am sure that if petrol is decontrolled motor transport will increase. Lifting of controls is leading everywhere to lowering prices. No decontrolled article has shown a rise in price. If this had not been so I would not be getting all these telegrams. Decontrol of petrol and increase in road transport will facilitate the movement of food and cloth in the country. Salt too will be more easily available.

It is the price of salt that needs to be cut down the most. The tax on salt has been withdrawn, but the price of salt has increased, which is wrong. We have not learnt to make salt. We have a vast sea coast and we should have no shortage of salt. Even a child can make salt out of sea-water. If I bring a little sea-water from the Bay of Bengal, I can easily convert it into salt. It is a pity that one has to pay so much for this commodity and take so much trouble. The reason is that salt is not being easily transported from where it is manufactured. I know a mistake has been made in this regard in appointing contractors to transport salt. They have become dishonest and are making a lot of money. Others cannot transport salt. This contract system should be changed and the control over salt should be lifted. Two things are important, the change in the contract system and the organization of road transport. That will do for today.

[From Hindi]; Courtesy: All India Radio. Also Prarthana Pravachan—II, pp. 247-9



94. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

(As Gandhiji was observing silence, his written speech was read out after the prayers.)

NEW DELHI,

December 29, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

Yesterday was the death anniversary of Hakim Ajmal Khan. Hakim Ajmal Khan belonged to all—Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Parsis and Jews. He was a devout Muslim. But he served everyone with equal devotion. The finest memorial to his labours was the famous Tibbia College and hospital in Delhi. All classes of students studied unani, ayurvedic and allopathic systems of medicine there. The communal poison, for which there was no place in this institution, has forced it to close down. I think the sole reason for this is that its founder Hakim Ajmal Khan was a Muslim, however good and however respected. If the memory of that great patriot cannot bury the communal strife let it at least give a new life to this college.

I mentioned earlier that it would be good to have our meetings in the open air under the canopy of the sky. If the habit grows we will have to make suitable arrangements for the site, etc., accordingly. In towns big and small we will have to have open space for the purpose. We will have to change our habits. We will have to learn to be quiet rather than noisy and we will have to learn to sit in an orderly way. We must also learn to speak only when we must and at a pitch that is sufficient for the occasion, neither too high nor too low. We should respect the right of our neighbour and not come in the way of others, individually or in groups. We should not interfere with other people's business. This will require on many occasions extreme self-restraint. In such an order of things the dirt and noise we find in the busiest areas of Delhi will no longer be there and however large the crowds there will be no pushing and jostling and no confusion. We must not think that we can never reach that goal. Some groups or others will have to take the initiative and work for this sincerely. Just think how much saving it will mean in energy and expenditure.

I have been severely reprimanded for what I said concerning Kashmir and its Maharaja (Vide "Speech at Prayer Meeting", 25-12-1947). It seems to me that those who upbraided me have not really read attentively what I said. The advice I gave is the kind of advice the humblest man may give. Occasionally it becomes one's duty to offer such advice.



If the Maharaja had acted on my advice he would have risen very high in his own eyes and in the eyes of the world. Today his own plight and the plight of his State are not enviable. Kashmir is a Hindu State, the majority of its people being Muslims. The raiders called their raids a jihad. They say that the Muslims of Kashmir are being ground down under the tyranny of Hindu raj and that they have come for their succour.

The Maharaja has invited Sheikh Abdullah at just the right time. The task is new for Sheikh Abdullah. But if the Maharaja thinks the Sheikh can shoulder the burden he should be encouraged in every way. It seems obvious to me, as it should seem obvious to others outside, that if Sheikh Abdullah cannot carry with him the minority as well as the majority, Kashmir cannot be saved by military might alone. Both the Maharaja and the Sheikh asked India for armed assistance.

My advice to the Maharaja is that he should be a constitutional sovereign like the King of England and run his government and use the Dogra army (1 The Jammu and Kashmir State Forces) according to the advice of Sheikh Abdullah and his Interim Cabinet. What is so strange about this? The terms of the State's accession to the Union remain as before. They confer certain rights on the rulers. I have ventured to advise the Maharaja that he should voluntarily relinquish or limit these rights and play his constitutional role as a Hindu ruler. If the reports I get are inaccurate they should be put right. If my views regarding Hinduism and the duties of a Hindu ruler are erroneous, there is no question of any weight being given to my advice. If the Sheikh as the Chief of the Emergency Administration or as a true Muslim is found wanting in doing his duty he should remove himself from the scene and hand over the reins of administration to a better man. Today Hinduism and Islam are being tested on the soil of Kashmir. If the right thing is done and the right direction given to the process the chief actors will win fame. It is my prayer that in the present darkness in the country Kashmir may become the star that provides light.

So much for the Maharaja and Sheikh Saheb. Will not the Governments of Pakistan and the Union come together and decide the issue with the help of impartial Indians? Is there no one in India who is impartial? I am sure we have not become bankrupt to that extent.

A lady from Mathura has sent Rs. 50 by M. O. for buying blankets for the refugees. She does not disclose her name even to me. She wants me to acknowledge receipt in my prayer speech. I accordingly do so.



It is surprising that people of the States whose rulers have expressed a desire to accede to India are sending me telegrams full of complaints. If a raja or a jagirdar feels that he cannot carry on the administration all by himself, who can force him to keep his State as a separate entity? Those who spend money on these telegrams would be better advised to save their money. It seems to me those behind these telegrams have some axe to grind. They should go to the Home Secretary for advice.

Several Muslims especially in the Post and Telegraph Department say that they had earlier declared their willingness to stay in the Union for propaganda purposes and that they now want to change their option. There are also Muslims who have been dismissed from service. I think the reason for this can only be that they are suspected of being anti-Hindu. I sympathize with them. But I feel that however unjustified the suspicion may be in individual instances it should be forgiven and they should not give way to anger. I can only offer my well-tried prescription. Very few people can get into Government jobs. It should never be one's aim in life to secure a Government job. One's aim in life should only be to live honestly. If a man is willing to use his hands he will always find scope to make an honest living. I think that if Muslims want to retain their self-respect they should not run after Government jobs to the extent of going to Pakistan for them. Power comes from true service. Often power becomes a cause for one's downfall. To fight for it is unseemly. At the same time it is the duty of the Government to create opportunities of employment for the large number of unemployed men and women. If the task is handled with skill it can bring benefits to the Government instead of being a strain. I assume here that those for whom work has to be found will be of sound health and will be willing workers, not shirkers.

[From Hindi]; Courtesy: All India Radio. Also Prarthana Pravachan—II, pp. 249-53



95. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

NEW DELHI,

December 30, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

I told you yesterday in my written message and I also mentioned earlier that we should all know our respective places. We must know when to speak and when to keep silent and how to conduct ourselves, so that even if millions are there, there should be no disturbance and no feeling of crowding. This is what happens with armies. They maintain an external discipline. What happens internally is another matter. We have not had this kind of training. I have often noticed that, when after the prayer I rise to go, people want to take a peep at me from all around and the crowd around me. Good manners demand that after the prayer meeting is over everyone should quietly remove himself. Each one should ponder on whatever good things I may have said and go home.

I have a letter from Bahawalpur. I once spoke about Bahawalpur to you. (Vide “Speech at Prayer Meeting”, 23-12-1947.) The people there liked what I said. They want me to mention the matter again and repeat that all the Hindus and Sikhs who are still there and who want to leave the place should be allowed to do so. All those who want to come have not been able to come. There are still a large number of people there. They want that no obstacle should be placed in their way and they should not be subjected to any assaults. Whether my saying anything on the subject will have any effect God alone knows. But one must make an effort whatever the effectiveness of one’s effort might be. Of course the Nawab has said that Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs are equal in his eyes. And he is equally interested in the welfare of all his subjects. When he says so, who am I to question his motives? Still I can plead with him and his officials that those Hindus and Sikhs who do not want to stay there should be allowed to leave. It is his duty to put them on a train and have them safely escorted to the border. But even if he cannot do so he can at any rate allow them to leave on their own, taking away such of their property as they can. It will be a matter of thankfulness if he can do this much. But I do not want to limit myself to only making a plea to the Nawab. I want to tell Qaid-e-Azam Jinnah and his Government that today it has become impossible for a Hindu or any non-Muslim to live peaceably in Sind. Those Hindus who are called untouchables are particularly harassed there and they have no means of livelihood.



They at least should not be subjected to indignities. Those who are not happy living there should be allowed to leave. If their conditions of life are made easy even those who have left Sind will go back there, seeing that Sind has regained its former state. But at present that is not the case. Even their schools have been taken over for the use of refugees who have gone there from Kathiawar. They say that the needs of the refugees are the first priority. How can Hindus live in Sind under such conditions? It will only mean that Pakistan has become Islamistan where no non-Muslim may live or where he can live only as a slave. I think no one will like to be a slave. This sort of thing is in no one's interest. I have many other things to say and only fifteen minutes to say them.

I had spoken to you about Pandharpur. (Vide "Speech at Prayer Meeting", 5-11-1947.) There is a temple there of Lord Vithoba. It is the largest temple in Maharashtra. I have visited it. I had suggested that it should be opened to Harijans. Afterwards the trustees of the temple also supported my demand. When I got the news that the temple had been opened to the Harijans I had told you of it. Everyone seemed content and no voice was raised in opposition. Now they say that a large number of Brahmin priests are unhappy over this because the temple is visited by many Harijans every day. Some of the priests seem to have gone on a fast. This has distressed me. I have received this wire only today, and since I cannot reach there in any other way I think I should make a mention of the matter here and maybe my voice will reach Pandharpur. I want to say in all humility and sincerity that those who have resorted to the fast and still call themselves priests are really not priests. They are serving neither themselves nor Hinduism. The image in the temple is the image of Vithoba, i. e., of Krishna or Vishnu. It could not be the will of Vishnu that some should have His glimpse and others may not. In my view as long as the Harijans were barred from the temple it had not been really consecrated. Why should these people now fast? A Bill has been passed concerning Harijans' entry into temples. Even the lawmakers are Hindus. When millions of Hindus say that the temple should be opened to Harijans, how can they say that it should remain closed? I see no merit in the fast. I think it is sinful and should be given up. I think the priests should relent and say they were mistaken and their eyes have now been opened. It cannot be that in the temple of God one man should be admitted and another kept out. It is believed that visiting a temple cleanses the sinner of his sins in the same way as bathing in the Ganga does. I personally do not support the view that the water from the Ganga washes away the sins but it is a belief widely held. And maybe it does good to one who bathes in the Ganga in the faith that his sins



will be washed away. Besides who can say that Harijans are all sinners? There are among Harijans persons of great merit as well as sinners.

A complaint has been sent to me pertaining to Bombay. It may be true of other places too. The complaint is that very little rice is supplied to card-holders in Bombay, perhaps half a seer in a week. This is wholly inadequate and will encourage black-marketing. I will say that control should go. Some people argue that rationing has brought much relief to cities. I think it should be removed from the cities too. If everyone conducts himself honestly there will be no need for controls.

[From Hindi]; Courtesy: All India Radio. Also Prarthana Pravachan—II, pp. 254-5



96. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

NEW DELHI,

December 31, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

Here are a few questions. Let me see how many of them I can deal with.

A friend writes to ask how, when Hindus and Sikhs cannot live peacefully in Sind, the Hindus from Punjab can be asked to go back. Has there been some significant change of heart? I think the Correspondent could not have asked the question if he had known the whole situation. What I had told the Punjab Hindus was after a meeting I had with some Muslim friends. (Vide "Speech at Prayer Meeting", 11-12-1947.) I cannot yet definitely advise the Punjab refugees to go back. It is right that so long as Hindus and Sikhs cannot live happily in Sind I cannot have any hopes as regards the Punjab either. At present the complaints I am receiving from all sides seem to be as to why Hindus and Sikhs from. Other places in Pakistan are not being allowed to come.

A few men from Chitral and Swat came to see me. They say there are still 251 Hindus in those places. I said that this was not a very large number. In Sind there are Hindus and Sikhs in much greater numbers and when they cannot come how can you expect the few in Swat and Chitral to be allowed to leave? The Government is doing what it can and so long as all the Hindus and Sikhs stranded in Pakistan do not arrive here it will not rest. I shall therefore not speak of the refugees returning to Pakistan till there is a change of heart. I know that if there is a change of heart in one place the same thing will happen at other places. If we have a change of heart here there will be a change of heart in Pakistan. It will take some effort no doubt but there will be a change. After all madness seized us only after it had seized people in Pakistan. I shall not go into the various stages and degrees of madness. If sanity does not return we shall lose both India and Pakistan. There will be a war. The present state cannot last. People say that the required change in the situation has already taken place, that Hindus and Sikhs have come to India and Muslims from India have gone to Pakistan. They point out that transfer of populations of such magnitude cannot be reversed. I do not hold this view. Even if I am the only one to say it I shall still say that so long as people do not go back to their homes there will be no peace in the two countries. All the comforts you can provide to the Sikh and Hindu refugees are not going to heal the



wounds they have suffered. It will be a matter of perpetual distress to them that they have lost their hearths and homes and if there is a war in fifty years' time or a hundred years' time, they are going to remember this. Such things are not forgotten.

A friend asks if the refugee camps cannot be made centres of training in handicrafts. This is certainly possible if even a single refugee wants it. It will not be necessary for me to bring any pressure on the Government to do this. It will readily agree to do what will save them the enormous expenditure they incur at present in running these camps. This will also enable the refugees to earn their livelihood without losing self-respect. I suggested that the friend should campaign for this and create an atmosphere where the refugees will themselves ask that they should be taught handicrafts. This will raise India higher and arrest the rot that has set in in India.

A lady has just given me this note. She is I think a Hindu from Pakistan. She says she had gone out for a short period and when she returned she found the lock of her house broken and some Sikhs occupying the house. She went to the police and had them arrested. One of them escaped. Now she wants to know what she should do—whether she should leave the house? I would not advise her to leave. I did not advise even those coming from Pakistan to leave their houses. But what is my advice worth? People will not be ready to lay down their lives on my saying so. I shall advise the lady not to leave her house. Why did the Sikh friends forcibly enter her house? The refugees should declare that they will not force themselves on anyone, nor enter anyone's house without permission. They should live on what little money they get.

A lady has written me a beautiful letter. She does not give her name and address. She says she listens to my speeches every day on the radio, but that the hymns and bhajans sung at the meeting are not relayed. She suggests that if not every day at least once every third or fourth day the prayer should be broadcast; that my speeches are only of mundane significance, while prayers are something spiritual. My speeches are recorded by the radio people and then relayed. I have no hand in this. Maybe they think that what I say will make for public good. I do not know what is possible for the radio people to do. But I think the bhajans sung here, however badly sung they may be, should be relayed. I respect the sister for what she has written. I must however disagree with her when she separates the prayer from the prayer speech. I have told you that what I say after the prayer is part of the prayer. I cannot sing it to you and my voice has no sweetness. Besides, I have grown so old that I would not be able to sing even if I wanted. So the girls sing and sing well. Whatever therefore



is said or sung here is a prayer addressed to God. I should advise people to understand this.

Now about Junagadh and Ajmer. I spoke to you about the telegrams from Junagadh. Now I have a telegram about Ajmer. I know the story concerning Ajmer. What happened there was pretty grim. But the telegram exaggerates it. Such exaggeration only annoys people and provokes them. There is already so much poison in Delhi; but to say that Muslim property there is being plundered and their houses burnt, and that the shrine is in danger, is not right. The fact is that no one is going to touch the shrine. Why then do they send me such telegrams? There certainly have been instances of looting there. There also have been cases of arson and killings too. This is not to be denied. But exaggerating it only makes it smaller. I appeal to everyone to compare the report with the events. Only then can we ensure the justice which we seek. If we cannot confine ourselves to facts we are doomed.

[From Hindi]; Courtesy: All India Radio. Also Prarthana Pravachan—II, pp. 255-8



97. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

NEW DELHI,

January 1, 1948

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

Today is New Year's Day according to the English calendar. I am happy to see such a large number of people gathered here. I regret that it took no less than 7 minutes for us to make room for the women to sit. Even one minute lost at such a meeting is hundreds of thousands of minutes lost to hundreds of thousands of people. Our brothers should learn to offer first place to the sisters. The country where women are not honoured is not really civilized. According to Manu (Codifier of Hindu Law, author of Manavadharmashastra, generally known as Manusmriti) men and women should both understand their own limits. We should learn to behave with added restraint now that we are free. I hope the audience attending the prayer meetings will be even larger in future. But all those that come should come with prayer in their hearts, for prayer is the food for the heart. We cannot get anywhere else such food as we get from God. I also hope that the audience will maintain silence and will return to their homes in silence.

Recently there was a Harijan conference in U. P., at which it is reported, a minister preached to the Harijans that they should give up their unclean habits, unclean living and unclean clothes and abstain from alcohol. A Harijan countered that the Government could burn up the unclean clothes just as it could have palm trees cut down and wine shops closed. I admire the courage of the Harijan friend. I for one make gur from palm. I shall advise the Harijan brethren that the cure is in their own hands. Even if liquor is sold in shops they should keep away from it as they would from poison. In fact liquor is worse than poison. Labourers drink in order to forget their domestic worries. Poison can only kill the body. Liquor can kill even the soul. One loses the ability to control one's action. I would advise the Government to close down liquor shops and to replace them by eating-houses where people could get pure and light food. Here they should distribute books from which people could learn something and they should provide to them some harmless entertainment. But there should be no place for cinema. This will help people to give up alcohol. I say this from my experience of many countries. I have seen this in India and I have also seen it in South Africa. I am quite sure that giving up alcohol increases both the physical vigour of man and his



capacity to earn. It is for this reason that prohibition has been a part of the Congress programme since 1920. Now that we are free the Government should redeem its pledge and give up the unholy excise revenue. It is not a real loss, for it will bring enormous good to the people. This is the way to our prosperity. We should achieve this through our own effort.

[From Hindi]; Prarthana Pravachan—II, pp. 258-9



98. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

NEW DELHI,

January 2, 1948

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

Tomorrow we may have to hold the prayer meeting at the Wavell Canteen, where many refugees are living. I have been there once and I was asked to hold the prayer meeting there, but I could not stay on. Today someone from the camp came and requested me and I have agreed to go there tomorrow. So if it does not rain tomorrow I shall hold the prayer there. But if it rains it may not be possible to have the prayer there. In that case we shall have it here. In any case the prayer meeting will be held. Thus it is a little uncertain about tomorrow. Of course if you wish, you may come here and if there is no prayer, you can go back.

I saw you laugh at my little umbrella (A broad straw hat which Gandhiji used as an umbrella). It is a beautiful thing. It costs nothing. It was given to me free of cost not because I am a Mahatma. The fact is that when I was touring in Noakhali, (From November 6, 1946 to March 1947) it was very hot and some people took pity on me and gave me this. They also put it on when it rains. Mostly people have to work in the fields, they cannot do so in the heat of the sun without putting this on. Muslims live there in large numbers. There are Hindus too, but mostly they carry on business. Everyone has this kind of umbrella. There was a Muslim friend there because after all every Muslim did not consider me his enemy and later they had all understood that I had not gone there to plunder them or to prepare a case against them, but I had gone there only to give such solace as I could to the Hindus. So they gave me this umbrella. I didn't really need it much there because I did not do more than an hour of walking each day. They also gave one to Nirmal Babu (Nirmal Kumar Bose, a professor of Calcutta University, who accompanied Gandhiji as his interpreter on his walking tour of Noakhali). When I left Noakhali Manu suggested that I should take along this umbrella because I would have to do a lot of walking in the sun and it would be a good covering for the head. This can be made anywhere. It can be made even here. The other kind of umbrella needs a handle while this has no handle. When it is windy we can tie the string attached to it round the face.



The bhajan that was sung today, though well sung, is really a morning bhajan. In this bhajan we pray to God to wake up. But God is always awake. He never sleeps. But there is a belief in Hinduism that when dawn breaks everyone must wake up. The devout go round calling everyone to arise. We have bhajans for the morning, bhajans for the noon, bhajans for the evening and bhajans for the night. Only musicologists know all the subtle distinctions. I do not know much but since some bhajan or other is sung here every day I have come to have some idea.

I have a long letter apparently written by a Hindu. He says I have learnt nothing and am still friendly with Muslims, though I have been repeatedly told how stupid it is to imagine that any Muslim can be our brother or be loyal to the Indian Union. If there are any such, he says, I should keep them and send the rest away. If I did not do so, what would happen, he asks, in case, God forbid, a war broke out between India and Pakistan. Do I imagine that the several crores of Muslims in India will be loyal to India and fight against Pakistan? It is easy to pose such questions but difficult to answer them. All that I can say is: Wherever we may choose to live, if we want to live as men we must not assume anyone to be bad till he has been proved to be bad. If you read newspapers you will know that recently about one lakh of Muslims had gathered in Lucknow. (At the Indian Union Muslims' Conference, which met on December 27 and 28, Abul Kalam Azad called for the winding up of the Muslim League in India. The Conference unanimously adopted a resolution asking Muslims in India to dissolve all communal and political organisations and advising them to join the Congress.) One cannot believe that there was not a single Muslim Leaguer among them. There must have been some, even if there had been no League leaders. If later they betray you, you can shoot them. You may shoot one or two or a certain number. Everyone will not be disloyal. Nowhere in the world can everyone be disloyal. Therefore the correspondent writes out of ignorance. But today he is angry. The barbarities the Muslims have committed are on his brain. He wants all Muslims to be driven out. If similarly Pakistan says that Hindus have committed barbarities here and they should be driven out, I shall say it is foolish to say so. It will be the limit of folly. It is this attitude that was responsible for the partition of the country. If you want to bring the two together, that can be done only if we become good. Only the good and the noble can be brave. Stupid people can never be brave. Today the poison around us is only increasing. Kashmir has added more poison. If there is a war both countries are going to bleed. I do not wish to be alive to see that. I do not wish to be a witness to that carnage. I can only pray to God and ask you all to join in the prayer that He may take me away. Why should we not so conduct ourselves that any conflict



between India and Pakistan becomes impossible? We must be brave and trust the Muslims. If later they violate the trust you can cut off their heads. But you cannot say that if anyone refuses to go to Pakistan his head should be cut off. This means cutting off millions of heads on both sides of the border which would be the limit of madness. There are now perhaps thirty or thirty-five millions of Muslims in India. If we harass them we shall not survive as a nation nor can our Hinduism. I pray to God that He may cure us of this folly and this madness so that our country which has advanced may continue to make progress. Today we seem to be falling and the sort of letter that the correspondent has written gives further impetus to the fall. The note is written in English. He writes English quite well, but I cannot praise him for that.

[From Hindi]; Courtesy: All India Radio. Also Prarthana Pravachan-II, pp. 260-1



99. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

(Held at Wavell Canteen Refugee Camp)

NEW DELHI,

January 3, 1948

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

I am happy to be able to fulfil the promise I made to you to visit the camp and speak a few words to you. I am also happy to observe that there are almost as many women in the camp as there are men. First of all I shall request you to join me in the prayer that peace and love may again be established in India and the world and all men may become brothers. Today there is no peace to be seen anywhere in the world. Peace cannot be established with the help of money. So long as there is no peace in the heart there can be no peace outside. Only when peace issues from within the heart and is expressed through the eyes, words and actions of men can we say that peace has been established. A man of peace can live happily even in a mud hut and has no thought of the morrow, for it is only God who knows what will happen on the morrow. Shri Ramachandra, who was a man like us, had no idea when he was about to be installed on the throne that he would have to go into exile. But he realized only too well that securing peace was not the same thing as securing a throne and that peace was not dependent on external conditions. Therefore when he knew that he had to go to the forest his peace was not ruffled. If Hindus and Sikhs could have that realization the madness that has seized them would have been cured and, whatever the actions of the Muslims, they themselves would have remained calm. If Hindus and Sikhs even now realize this, I am sure it will have the most desirable effect on the Muslims.

I am told that this camp is being very well managed. I cannot accept this assurance fully till I know that the refugees too fully participated in keeping the camp clean and that they cooperate with the officials in every way. I know how dirty the streets of Delhi are. One can only say that the camp is well managed when it is made to look at least cleaner than the roads of Delhi. I know the sufferings you have had to bear. Some of you have come from well-to-do homes. You must not hope here for the comforts you had in the past. You must learn to adapt yourselves to the new situation and try with patient labour to improve your conditions.



I remember how on the eve of the Boer War in 1899 Englishmen had left the Transvaal for Natal. They knew how to face hardships. They all lived the same way. One of them was an engineer and worked with me as a carpenter. We have been a slave country for centuries and we have not learnt this virtue. Now that we are free - and freedom is a precious thing - I hope our refugee brothers and sisters will learn something from their sufferings and make this an ideal camp so that people, if not from all over the world, least from all over India, can come and visit it and take pride in it. The hymn that has been sung in the prayer just now means that we should surrender to God all that we possess and take from it only the barest minimum for our needs. If we act in conformity with this hymn, not only this camp but the whole of Delhi will breathe a new life and all our hearts will be filled with an inner joy.

[From Hindi]; Courtesy: All India Radio. Also Prarthana Pravachan—II, pp. 261-2



100. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

NEW DELHI,
January 4, 1948

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

I have been a little late today because it had been raining and I was told that I should be in no hurry for I might not find many people here. But I said that no matter how small the audience, it was my duty to be present. There was also some other business to attend to and this took a few minutes. I thank you for having come in spite of the rain and it gives me much satisfaction that there are so many of you. It shows that you are keen on the prayer. If you have come merely out of curiosity then it has no value.

Today there is talk of war everywhere. Everyone fears a war breaking out between the two countries. If that happens it will be a calamity both for India and for Pakistan. India has written to the U. N. because whenever there is a fear of conflict anywhere the U. N. is asked to promote a settlement and to stop fighting from breaking out. India therefore wrote to the U. N. O. However trivial the issue may appear to be, it could lead to a war between the two countries. It is a long memorandum and it has been cabled. (On January 1, 1948, the Government of India submitted a formal complaint to the Security Council. Vide Appendix "Letter from Indian Representatives to the Security Council", 1-1-1948) Pakistan's Zafarullah Khan (At a Press conference at Karachi, on January 1, Mohammad Zafarullah Khan, Pakistan Foreign Minister, denying Pakistan's complicity in the attack on Kashmir had stated: "Kashmir on all sides was surrounded by predominantly Muslim areas and realizing that something was to be done to help the Kashmir Muslims in their plight, individual Muslims from the surrounding areas did whatever they could to bring help.") and Liaquat Ali Khan (Denying the charges of aggression and looting, the Prime Minister of Pakistan had, among other things, stated on January 3: "There are some who are helping the forces of the Azad Kashmir Government, who have come from tribal areas because of the reports . . . of the general massacre of Muslims that had been going on in Kashmir by armed bands of Hindus, Sikhs and troops of the Maharaja." He claimed that "the conspiracy and plans for the occupation of Kashmir by Indian troops were laid well in advance and the excuse that India sent her troops because of the so-called invaders having entered Kashmir territory, was only intended to deceive the world." He further said that "we made it clear that we had no control over the forces of the Provisional Government of Kashmir or the tribesmen, engaged in fight.") have since issued long statements. I would take leave to say that their argument does not appeal to me. You may ask if I approve of the Union Government approaching the U. N. O. I may say that I both approve and do not



approve of what they did. I approve of it, because after all what else are they to do? They are convinced that what they are doing is right. If there are raids from outside the frontier of Kashmir, the obvious conclusion is that it must be with the connivance of Pakistan. Pakistan can deny it. But the denial does not settle the matter. Kashmir has acceded to India. And India has accepted the accession upon certain conditions. If Pakistan harasses Kashmir and if Sheikh Abdullah who is the leader of Kashmir asks the Indian Union for help, the latter is bound to send help. Such help therefore was sent to Kashmir. At the same time Pakistan is being requested to get out of Kashmir and to arrive at a settlement with India over the question through bilateral negotiations. If no settlement can be reached in this way then a war is inevitable. It is to avoid the possibility of war that the Union Government has taken the step it did. Whether they are right in doing so or not God alone knows.

Whatever might have been the attitude of Pakistan, if I had my way I would have invited Pakistan's representatives to India and we could have met, discussed the matter and worked out some settlement. They keep saying that they want an amicable settlement but they do nothing to create the conditions for such a settlement. I shall therefore humbly say to the responsible leaders of Pakistan that though we are now two countries - which is a thing I never wanted - we should at least try to arrive at an agreement so that we could live as peaceful neighbours. Let us grant for the sake of argument that all Indians are bad, but Pakistan at least is a new-born nation which has moreover come into being in the name of religion and it should at least keep itself clean. But they themselves make no such claim. It is not their argument that Muslims have committed no atrocities in Pakistan. I shall therefore suggest that it is now their duty, as far as possible, to arrive at an amicable understanding with India and live in harmony with her. Mistakes were made on both sides. Of this I have no doubt. But this does not mean that we should persist in those mistakes, for then in the end we shall only destroy ourselves in a war and the whole of the sub-continent will pass into the hands of some third power. That will be the worst imaginable fate for us. I shudder to think of it. Therefore the two Dominions should come together with God as witness and find a settlement. The matter is now before the U.N.O. It cannot be withdrawn from there. But if India and Pakistan come to a settlement the big powers in the U.N.O. will have to endorse that settlement. They will not object to the settlement. They themselves can only say that they will do their best to see that the two countries arrive at an understanding through mutual discussions. Let us pray to God that He may spare us the threatened strife, but not at any price. All that we may pray to God is to grant



that we may either learn to live in amity with each other or if we must fight to let us fight to the very end. That may be folly, but sooner or later it will purify us.

Now a few words about Delhi. I came to know of the incidents which took place last evening through Brijkishan. I went to the Camp (Wavell Centeen Refugee Camp) for the evening prayer. I came away after the prayer but he had stayed over to talk to the people in the Camp. There are some Muslim houses at a little distance from the Camp. About four or five hundred inmates of the Camp— mostly women and children but also some men—issued out of the Camp to take possession of the houses. I am told they did not indulge in any kind of violence. Some of the houses were vacant. Some were occupied by the owners. They tried to take possession even of the latter. The police were near at hand. They immediately went to the spot and brought the situation under control at about 9 O'clock according to the newspapers but about 11 O'clock according to the information I have. The police have stayed there. I understand they had to use tear gas. Tear gas does not kill but it can be pretty painful. I am told that something has happened today again.

All I can say is that it is a matter of great shame for us. Have not the refugees learnt even from their immense suffering that they have to exercise some restraint? It is highly improper to go and occupy other people's houses. It is for the Government to find them shelter or whatever else they need. Today the Government is our own. But if we defy our own Government and defy the police and forcibly occupy houses the Government is not likely to continue for long. It is still worse that such things should happen in the capital city of India where there are so many ambassadors from all over the world. Do we want to show them the spectacle of people occupying whatever they can? It is all the more regrettable that women and children were used as a shield. It is inhuman. It is like Muslim rulers keeping a herd of cows in the vanguard of their armies to make sure that the Hindus would not fight. It is uncivilized, barbaric behaviour. It is still more barbaric to put women and children in front to provide against the police making a lathi charge. It is abuse of womanhood. I must humbly ask all the refugees, women and children, not to behave in this way. Let them settle down. If they don't, then apart from a war between India and Pakistan, we may kill ourselves in mutual strife. We may lose Delhi and make ourselves the laughing-stock of the world. If we want to keep India a free country, we must stop the things that are at present going on.

[From Hindi]; Courtesy: All India Radio. Also Prarthana Pravachan - II, pp. 263-7



101. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

(As Gandhiji was observing silence, this was read out after the prayer.)

NEW DELHI,

January 5, 1948

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

I am being flooded with letters and telegrams congratulating me on the lifting of controls on most things and pleading that the controls which still remain should be lifted. I give below the substance of an English letter, written by a successful businessman. The letter says:

As desired by you I give below the comparative prices of white sugar, jaggery, brown sugar and other articles of food before and after lifting of controls.

	Current rates	Rates in November before lifting of controls
Sugar	Rs. 37-8 a maund	Rs. 80 to 85 a maund
Jaggery	Rs. 13 to 15 „ „	Rs. 30 to 32 „ „
Brown Sugar	Rs. 14 to 18 „ „	Rs. 37 to 45 „ „
Sugar Cubes	11 As. a packet	Rs. 1-8 to Rs. 1-12 a packet
Sugar deshi	Rs. 30 to 35 a maund	Rs. 78 to 80 per maund

It will be noticed that prices of sugar have fallen by 50 p. c.

Wheat	Rs. 18 to 20 a maund	Rs. 40 to 50 a maund
Rice Basmati	Rs. 25 „ „	Rs. 40 to 45 „ „
Maize	Rs. 15 to 17 „ „	Rs. 30 to 35 „ „
Gram	Rs. 16 to 18 „ „	Rs. 38 to 40 „ „
Mung	Rs. 23 „ „	Rs. 35 to 38 „ „
Urad	Rs. 23 „ „	Rs. 34 to 37 „ „
Arhar	Rs. 22 „ „	Rs. 32 „ „



Pulses:

Gram	Rs. 20 „ „	Rs. 30 „ „
Mung	Rs. 26 „ „	Rs. 39 „ „
Urad	Rs. 26 „ „	Rs. 37 „ „
Arhar	Rs. 22 „ „	Rs. 32 „ „

Oil:

Mustard	Rs. 65 „ „	Rs. 75 „ „
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Following lifting of controls the market is inundated with woollen and silken textiles. Their prices have fallen by 50 p. c. and at some places by 66 p. c. In the expectation that control on cotton textiles will be lifted their prices are slowly falling. If the control is lifted then the prices are likely to fall by 60 p. c. This will lead to competition among the various mills and make cloth more easily available. But if control on cotton textile is lifted the export of cloth from India should be banned for at least three years. In Government offices they merely play mysterious games with the figures of statistics. They should not hinder the implementation of decontrol. Presumably petrol was controlled on account of the exigencies of war and can now be decontrolled. The truth is that control on petrol has benefited only a few transport companies which have now a vested interest in keeping the control. It does not benefit the masses. It need hardly be pointed out that a single bus or truck which has a permit to ply on one particular stretch of road will be able to make Rs. 15,000 a month. If the control on petrol is lifted one cannot earn more than Rs. 300 a month out of one vehicle. Today petrol permits are freely being sold. A petrol permit for one lorry can easily be sold to a transport magnate for as much as Rs. 10,000. If control is lifted the various problems before the country such as food, housing and so on will be solved by themselves. Please try to have the control on petrol lifted and help the masses who are suffering on account of control. A free India should have no use for controls.

It seems to me that there is not much one can say when faced with these figures. Maybe I am ignorant, those with more knowledge should correct me. (1 Commenting on this, A. D. Gorawala, former President of Commodities Prices Board, said in Bombay that the prices quoted before decontrol were blackmarket prices and that “reports from various areas of Bombay



showed that after decontrol prices had risen from 50 to 100 per cent above the controlled rates” for wheat and sugar.) When people by and large want a thing there is no room left for any hesitation in a democracy.

It is said that India consumes merely one per cent of the amount of petrol produced in the world. There is no cause for despair in this. After all our road transport does go on. But does it mean that because we are not warlike people we do not need more petrol? Or if we need more, will there be shortage for the rest of the world? Let not the learned laugh at my ignorance. I seek light. If I hide the darkness I cannot get light. The question is: If so little petrol falls to our share, how is it that huge stocks of petrol are available in the black-market?

If the situation described by the correspondent really prevails it is shocking. It means that controls are a boon to the rich and a bane for the poor. And yet it is in the name of the poor that the controls are imposed. If that is how monopoly functions it should be done away with without a moment’s thought.

As for cloth, if we have not forgotten khadi which has been described as “the livery of freedom”¹ there is no possible argument for continuing the control over it. We have enough cotton and we have innumerable hands which can work the looms and the wheels in the villages. We can thus produce without difficulty enough cloth for ourselves. It needs neither the noise of the cities nor motor transport. In former times the railways first served the need of the army. Its second task was to carry cotton to the ports and carry cloth into the interior from the ports. Now our calico is khadi. It is made in villages and is consumed in villages. There is therefore no need of centralization here. Let us not ruin our villages out of our indolence or our ignorance.

[From Hindi]; Courtesy: All India Radio. Also Prarthana Pravachan—II, pp. 267-70



102. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

NEW DELHI,

January 6, 1948

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

I hear that even today people have been trying to get into the Muslim houses. The police have been doing their duty and trying to stop them. After all, what can the police do? They can only resort to tear gas. I am told that that was what they did. There is plenty of room here. One cannot say that Delhi lacks space. There is no doubt that refugees are in a bad plight. It is not right that they should have to live under the open sky. When it rains it is not enough that they should have only a cloth between them and the sky. Therefore, in distress they resort to anything. But it does not seem right that they should single out only Muslim houses. I told one of them that this was a pretty big house, a large number of men could be accommodated here. They could throw me out and also throw out the ailing woman with me and afterwards the owner. He said that it was easy for me to find accommodation but who would give the refugees any accommodation? I would understand what they are doing if every other recourse had failed and if the people of Delhi had also failed them. But it is not good, it will do us no good to occupy the houses of those we have scared away or driven out.

The police today offered the refugees a few houses which they refused. Let them say clearly that they do not want any Muslims here. It would not be decent but at least it would have the virtue of being a straightforward course. They may say that since the Muslims have killed Hindus in Pakistan they shall kill the Muslims in India or that they do not trust them. But what is happening today is sheer madness.

Our present misfortune is that people unthinkingly indulge in meaningless rowdyism. The mentality seems to be that now that we are a free country we can do what we like. A report from Bombay says that the Government there is in a great difficulty. Dock workers have gone on strike. (The workers of the engineering department of the Bombay Port Trust were demanding speedy implementation of the Pay Commission's recommendations.) Such strikes are going to be our undoing, to say nothing of the fact that they can bring no benefit to the workers whichever the party behind the strike may be, Congress or Socialist or Communist or any other. Our country today is passing



through a critical phase. Our effort should be to tide over the present situation and survive.

I have a letter from the Maharaja of Aundh, a small State in Maharashtra. (Vide “Speech at Prayer Meeting”, 4-1-1948.) He had even when the British rule was still strong in India handed over the reins of the government to the people of his State. He and his son felt that they should serve the people. They devised a constitution, had a body elected and made it responsible for the administration. The Maharaja writes that the feeling among the other Rulers is that whatever he may do he should only do along with the other Rulers and that he should not act all by himself. He has almost decided to merge his State with India but he still continues to be the Raja, though only as a servant of his people. He will accept whatever is sanctioned to him by his people. Sardar Saheb feels that the Rulers should be given pensions, unconditionally, whether they functioned as such or not. He has started the process with Orissa. (The administration of the 25 Orissa States was taken over by the Government of India on January 1 and they were merged with the Orissa Province.) I do not consider it right that the Maharaja of Aundh should be pensioned off. Only he should not interfere in the administration because the State now has a responsible Government. But he has been told that the nature of administration in his State cannot be different from what it is in other States that have merged with India. It cannot have separate laws. But I say there is no need for any laws. When the power has been handed over to the people, it does not mean that the administration should be conducted from Delhi. If there is a representative government, it will have villagers on it. Such a body should run the administration. There should be no need to interfere with its work. Nor can any law be made for interfering with it. Otherwise, it would not be a popular rule. Popular rule cannot be established by the sword.

A friend writes that only a happy country can be said to have Ramarajya, that we may import goods from outside, but only as much as we can export, so that the trade is balanced. He says this has not been the case with us. We have always been debtors. Lately we have become creditors. But how long can we remain creditors if we keep up the present rate of spending? What we should do is to have the very minimum of imports and the very maximum of exports. Only then can we have a surplus of foreign exchange.

The fact is that what we import from outside is only our raw material converted into consumer goods. Our aim should be that we should have no need for importing



anything or if we import anything it should only be to help other countries. If some country needs money and asks us for it we should be able to send the money. The correspondent is right in saying that so far America alone is such a country. We do not want to be like America but at least we can reduce our imports to match our exports.

[From Hindi]; Prarthana Pravachan—II, pp. 271-4



103. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

NEW DELHI,

January 7, 1948

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

I have here several notes and I shall try to deal with as many as I can within 15 minutes.

A friend writes that he has gone on an indefinite fast. All that I can say is that it is not right for him to fast. To resort to a fast thus is a sin. While I am alive I should be consulted because I have much experience of fasting. I shall not go into the matter further.

I am told that students are about to go on strike. The date set is the 9th. I must say that it will be a wrong step. As I pointed out yesterday, resorting to strikes to gain one's end is not a good thing. I have no doubt in my mind that it is not non-violence. I have conducted many non-violent strikes. It cannot be said that every strike is non-violent and every strike is legitimate. Students should confine themselves to studies and keep away from strikes. I hope they will listen to me. I may again mention that I have had a long experience spanning some fifty years of non-violent strikes. I carried it on successfully not in India but in South Africa. I do not remember any instance when it failed me in anything I had undertaken. It cannot fail. If your cause is just and if what you are doing is the only course open to you, you are bound to succeed.

Today I received visitors from Punjab, Sind, the Frontier Province and other places—all in Pakistan. They described to me their sufferings and asked me why I was not doing anything in the matter. How can they know all that I am trying to do? The only reason I am staying here is that I may be able to get something done somehow for these people. Today I have become weak. Time was when what I said went home. Today it is not the case. Then I was the General of non-violence. Now that time is past. Today mine is a cry in the wilderness. But even if I am alone I must say what is right. People say that the Government is manned by persons who are my co-workers and that they will do whatever I say. It is true that they are my co-workers, but why should they do whatever I say? They will only do what seems right to them. I can plead with them and argue with them. If they see the point, well and good; if not, I am helpless. They might tell me that running a government is full of complications and difficulties,



and that if I were in the Government I would find out that I could not do as I pleased. If the Ministers who are my friends, their secretaries and the police, for I am no one's enemy, were all to go by what I said all would be well. The Government can always say that they do not have the right type of officials and staff. They are the same people who were there during the British rule. They cannot be turned out either. Whatever the reasons, I cannot make the Government today do all that I want. I am as helpless as any one of you. I am not God. I do only what my strength permits.

But what are the people to do? They have to have shelter, clothing and food. When I myself have all those things, why should anyone be deprived of them? After all they have not committed any crime like assault or murder. They have been hounded out from their homes. They are our brothers and sisters. They have been subjected to indignities and injustice and if even on coming here they cannot live in peace they have the right to turn round and demand why they should be deprived of the necessities of life when they are freely available to others. I admit this is unjust. But I have told them what they can do. The way is not for them to get into anyone's house and occupy it. Their attack should be non-violent. I have also told them which houses are thus to be attacked.

They must also agree to do any kind of work assigned to them to the extent that they can. For instance you may not assign writing work to a man who cannot write. But if you give a pickaxe to a man he should not say that he can only wield a pen. Similarly they should live in any shelter that is given to them, be it a tent or a room. All that is necessary is that there should be a roof overhead and it should not matter if it is only a thatched roof. Similarly they do not need any cots. One can sleep on straw very comfortably. I know from experience that straw can be as warm as any cotton mattress. Let us accept as a blessing from God anything we can get. If people can learn contentment the few lakhs of refugees can be made reasonably happy. There is plenty of room here. Only their hearts should be clean. Unfortunately the case is the very reverse.

You saw what has happened in Karachi. (Vide footnote to "A Letter", 7-1-1948.) People used to say that such things could not happen in Sind. I always said that Hindus could not live in peace in Sind. And not only Hindus, even others. That was proved yesterday. They had assembled in a Gurdwara awaiting evacuation. The Gurdwara was attacked. A few were killed, some were injured. The Government says that the situation was brought under control as soon as possible. But in the first place such a thing should



not have happened at all. I must tell the Pakistan Government to see that such things do not happen or else they should quit the Government. Maybe if there is no government there will be plunder and looting for a few days. But later the situation will improve. I have the same thing to say to the Government in India. I shall not listen to the Government saying that people cannot be persuaded. If the people cannot be persuaded they must give up the pretext of governing. Both the Governments are the same in my eyes. If the Pakistan Government allows the people to be murdered in this way, the Government will not last long. To you, brothers, I shall only say, do not let yourselves become mad. You must swallow your anger. You must not answer anger with anger and say, 'We will destroy the mosques, occupy them and kill the Muslims.' This will not be just. Such personal vengeance will put an end to the rule of law. Certainly we should provide all reasonable facilities to the refugees. It will be shameful if we do not. We should not be afraid or upset or angry over what has happened in Karachi. In return we on our part should live peacefully. If we can conduct ourselves decently, if we let the Muslims stay on, and if the refugees behave with civility, we shall soon overcome the present painful situation.

[From Hindi]; Courtesy: All India Radio. Also Prarthana Pravachan—II, pp. 275-9



104. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

NEW DELHI,

January 8, 1948

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

A correspondent refers to what I had said about the Harijans and drinking. (Vide “Speech at Prayer Meeting”, 1-1-1948.) As a matter of fact it was not only Harijans I had mentioned but all others. He asks if only Harijans should give up drinking, what about the soldiers and rich people? It is a silly question. If the rich do not give up drinking, does it mean that others too should not give it up? Even if there is no prohibition drinking does not become a virtue. Does it mean that if others sin we should also sin? Since he has asked me I would tell him that all those who drink should give up the habit. Since the Harijans and the labour class cannot be persuaded the law must persuade them. They take to drinking because they are deprived of other comforts of life. They want to drown their poverty in drink. But what reason can there be for the rich and the soldiers to drink? It is not that all the soldiers drink. Even among the English there are many who do not drink. Everyone should give up drinking. The law will apply to all. It will not make any exception in favour of the rich.

I shall speak now of the students’ strike. I understand that students who are Congress supporters will not join the strike. It seems the strike was organized by the Communist students. There are all types of students—Communist, Socialist and Congress supporters. I am not concerned with that. I am addressing them all. If the Congress students are not taking part in the strike they deserve to be complimented. I shall advise all the students not to go on strike. It pains me that Communist students are taking this step. Communists are clever people. They too want to serve the country. But this is not the way to serve the country. And why should the students support any particular party? The students form a party themselves. Their job is to study not merely for themselves but for the service of the country. So long as one is a student one is not a Communist, or a Socialist, or a Congressman. One is merely a student devoted wholly to studies. Strike for them will be fatal.

I have a question here. It is a good question. I am asked why I who have been advising everyone to give up evil things don’t offer the same advice to Pakistan, why I do not go there and resort to satyagraha. I have answered the question except for the



satyagraha part. How can I go to Pakistan so long as we are behaving here as they do in Pakistan? I can only go to Pakistan after India has cleansed herself. I will do or die here. Hindus and Sikhs of Delhi have gone mad. They want all the Muslims here to be driven out. A large number have already gone. They want the rest also to go. There are Sikhs and Hindus in Pakistan who want to come away. But what is the use of satyagraha today? There is no satyagraha and no ahimsa left now. Everyone has become a votary of violence. They want the help of the army and can be happy only when they have such help. Today armed forces have replaced God. Today even our newspapers are spreading filth. If people would listen to me, the newspapers would present a very different picture. The correspondent asks: "Since Hindus and Sikhs in such large numbers have been thrown out of Pakistan, where is the place for the Muslims to live? And so long as the same number of Muslims do not leave India, where is the place for the refugees to occupy?" I think that the number of Muslims who have already left equals the number of Hindu and Sikh refugees from Pakistan. It is madness to demand that the rest of them should also go because attempts are being made to drive out from Pakistan the Hindus and Sikhs still left there. We still have large numbers of Muslims in India. I am told that the meeting called by Maulana Azad in Lucknow was attended by 70,000 Muslims. It was the largest number of Muslims who attended a meeting in recent times. Must we kill all those Muslims or send them away to Pakistan, and why? I shall never give such shameful advice. There is no bravery in it.

A number of people from Bahawalpur came to see me today. A few people from Mirpur-Kashmir also came. They are obviously in great difficulty. While they were still talking Panditji dropped in. I asked him to hear what the visitors had to say. The representatives of Mirpur had a talk with Panditji and I hope something will be done. I do not say that all that they want will be done. Although it is not yet a formal war, it is something very similar. In the circumstances it will be difficult to find a way of bringing over all the people marooned there. I am sure the Government will do what it can. But if there are still some people left there who cannot be helped, there is nothing much we can do about it. We do not have enough trains and buses. The Kashmir road is not yet fit for transporting millions of people. It is too narrow.

The Bahawalpur refugees told me that the other refugees could have their names registered for jobs and send in applications, but that all the applications of those coming from Bahawalpur were not being entertained. They asked why there should be such discrimination. They were very polite and reasonable. They said that



people coming from the Frontier Province, the Punjab and Sind could apply and were eligible for jobs. I said this could not be true and if there was such discrimination against the refugees from Bahawalpur it must be a mistake. The Sardar has said that there would not be any discrimination. However, I shall find out.

[From Hindi]; Prarthana Pravachan—II, pp. 279-83



105. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

NEW DELHI,

January 9, 1948

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

I want to say something about a Hindu temple in Bahawalpur. It is still there but is no more in the possession of the Hindus. The chief priest of the temple came to see me today. His name is Bhagwandas. He saw with his own eyes how the temple was attacked and how the Hindus ran for their lives by the backdoor. The chief priest also ran away with them. He described to me how he was able to save some women. He could not save them all but quite a number were rescued. He wants me to find a way of bringing over the Hindus still stranded there. I told him that I was doing all that a single individual could do. The Government was trying to do something but it was not easy because one Government should not interfere in the affairs of another. I have said it before and I say it again that what is required at the present juncture is patience. We should not fear death. We must fear dishonour and indignity. To save one's honour one must lay down one's life. If someone is asked to embrace Islam or be prepared to die, he must choose death. Death is inevitable and cannot be avoided for ever. This of course does not mean that we should not do what we can to save ourselves but our ultimate trust should be in God.

A refugee came to see me today. He was not a beggar, nor a poor man. He has known prosperity. He lives in a bungalow nearby. The bungalow belonged to a Muslim who ran away. The refugee friend was a friend of that Muslim. He comes from the place where the Muslim has gone to settle. He told him to go and live in his bungalow. Now he says he has received a notice from the Government asking him to vacate the bungalow which is required for public purposes. I have no doubt that the Government would requisition the house. There are many people, ambassadors and others coming from outside and the Government would want to provide them proper accommodation. After all, the Government cannot put up new houses by magic. It is said that sages had this power in former times. It is related in the Ramayana how the sage Bharadwaja had made a whole city appear from nowhere with the power of his mantra. Today I know of no such mantra. I therefore can understand it if the Government requisitions houses when it wants them but it should then provide alternative accommodation to the people living there. If the Government just pushes



out the occupants, where are they to go? I am sure the Government cannot act thus. But if such a notice has been received I cannot really hold out any assurance of help. I myself do not have a house of my own. I am living in another's house. The affected person should approach the Government. I still think that what he says is not correct but if it is, it is a painful matter. I know that anyone lawfully residing in a house cannot be served with such a notice.

I have several other letters. A correspondent attributes to me the statement that in Bombay everyone was allowed to draw one seer of rice per day as his rationed quota. So far as I remember I never said this. In the present conditions of scarcity one seer of rice per day per head would be too liberal an allowance. Still I shall see what I had said. He says the quota is a quarter seer per head, per day. This means one seer in four days. This is not too bad. But in fact I recollect it was only one seer in seven days. But if I had said that the allowance was one seer per head per day it should be taken as incorrect.

There are so many notes and letters that I find it difficult to decide which one to take up. One says that I am staying here in Birla House where poor people cannot enter; formerly when I was in Bhangi Colony poor people could approach me. What he says is true and I like it. I think I had referred to this the first time I came here. (Vide "Speech at Prayer Meeting", 10-9-1947.) I came here at a time when Delhi was in the grip of communal rioting. The town looked like a graveyard. Bhangi Colony had also become crowded with refugees and it was feared that anything might happen anywhere. So the Sardar said that he would not allow me to live there. So they moved me to Birla House. I did not object because after all I cannot make do with a room. There had to be an office and a kitchen, and moreover there are many people living with me. Here I am also within easy reach of the ministers. They do not send for me. They themselves come to me. It is their kindness. It takes them only two minutes to come here. It took them 10 to 16 minutes to go to Bhangi Colony. The Muslim brethren also find it easy to come here while they are scared of going to Bhangi Colony. It will be a great thing if we can save such things as are left. Today goondaism rules the streets. Anyone going on a bicycle is pulled down and his money or watch is snatched away. Even those travelling in cars are stopped and looted. Such is our present plight. It is a matter of great shame.

[From Hindi]; Courtesy: All India Radio. Also Prarthana Pravachan—II, pp. 283-5



106. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

NEW DELHI,

January 10, 1948

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

It is shocking to see how we have fallen today. Those who pretend to be sadhus and boast of self-control and their recitation of the Gita, show no self-control at all. (A man wearing a saffron robe had got up and insisted on reading out his letter to Gandhiji. It was with great difficulty that he was made to sit down.) But generally these days the prayer meetings are quiet and well-ordered, which is a good thing.

I had been warned that the Bahawalpur refugees would create a disturbance today and would keep on shouting through the meeting. (As Gandhiji walked to the prayer ground, the refugees from Bahawalpur staged a demonstration and shouted slogans asking for help for the 70,000 Hindus and Sikhs stranded there. They became perfectly peaceful when Gandhiji sat down for prayers.) I said it could not be true. I know their sufferings. I assure them that all the Hindus and Sikhs stranded there will be brought over. The Nawab has given the assurance—although I do not know how much one can depend on the assurances of Rajas and Nawabs—that from now on Hindus and Sikhs there will not be subjected to any harassment, that those who want to leave will be allowed to leave under proper arrangements and those remaining will not be asked to embrace Islam. It may be that they are all safe there. The Government too is seized of the matter. You may demand that they should be brought over right now. But you must understand that, though formerly we were one country, we are now two countries and enemies of each other. We try to do what we can. There are seventy thousand Hindus and Sikhs there. In Sind the number is much larger. They are not safe there. I have a telegram from Karachi which says that the situation is much worse than it was described in the newspapers and that the damage done was much greater. The times are such that we must maintain the utmost self-possession and patience. If we lose patience we shall lose the battle. Defeat is a word that should find no place in our dictionary. For this it is necessary not to be provoked into anger. We have to think calmly about what we must do.

Today the Iranian Ambassador came to see me. He is a guest of the Government. He said, “Iran and India have always been friends. Both Iranians and Indians come of Aryan stock.” He is right. If we look at the Zend Avesta, we shall find



many Sanskrit words in it. We have also had dealings with each other. The Ambassador said that India was the largest nation in Asia and that Iran sincerely wanted friendship with India. Gurudev (Rabindranath Tagore) had once paid a visit to Iran and he was very satisfied with the visit. The Ambassador told me that the relations between Iran and India ought not to be allowed to deteriorate. I asked him how that could be. Then he referred to an incident involving an Iranian in Bombay. There are many Iranians in Bombay. They run tea-shops there, which are visited by large numbers of Hindus, Muslims, Parsis and Christians. There seems to have been some rioting there. I do not know anything about it. I am told some Iranians were killed. Iranians are after all Muslims. So the rioters must have decided that it was quite all right to kill them. I asked him if he had any complaint to make about the way the Government handled the situation. He said he had none and that the Government had quickly brought the situation under control. He says the Government here too is good, that it has posted armed guards for the protection of the Muslims who are here. He says in Iran Hindu, Sikh and Muslim traders lived together in amity. Exaggerated reports from India are always going there. What may happen in future nobody knows. But the Government in Iran is keeping itself vigilant, and it does not want to weaken its friendship with India for whatever reason.

I still have two minutes, so I take up a letter. The correspondent says that, though some people are happy that the controls on articles of food have been lifted, he would like to warn me that lifting of controls has not been a very good thing and that I have only been getting one-sided information. But when I receive so many wires and letters congratulating me, what am I to say? I cannot reject them saying that they present only one view. I cannot know the opinions of all and I cannot see everything that is happening in the world because I am not gifted with divine sight. The millions of people in India are my eyes and ears, hands and feet. I also want to know the other side. Do not believe in anything simply because I say it. Believe only what your eyes see. You will learn from your mistakes. Do what appears to you right. Only then will you be able to keep your freedom and deserve it.

[From Hindi]; Courtesy: All India Radio. Also Prarthana Pravachan—II, pp. 285-7



107. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

NEW DELHI,

January 11, 1948

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

Only yesterday I complimented you on the calm you maintained in the meeting. But if boys and girls continue to whisper or if women bring children who cry it is not good education for them. (It being a Sunday, a large number of people attended the prayer meeting.) If they cannot keep the children quiet they should not bring them to the meeting. I shall request all my brothers and sisters to have the decency to keep quiet and also to keep the children quiet. Continuous conversation during prayer obstructs it. They should realize that God is omnipotent and omnipresent. He hears everything. We must not abuse His silence and mercy.

I have to refer to a painful matter. It concerns Andhra. I have two letters from Andhra. One of them is from an elderly gentleman (Konda Venkatappayya; vide “Letter to Konda Venkatappayya”, 12-1-1948 and “Speech at Prayer Meeting”, 12-1-1948.) whom I know and who does not write as a rule. The other is from a young man whom I do not know. There is no use telling you the names because you do not know them. Both say that after August 15, all fear has vanished from people’s minds. The British who were feared are gone. There is no fear of punishment and also no fear of God. In Andhra people are of robust health and when they feel that they are free they lose all self-control. Now they do nothing but what will further their self-interest. One of the correspondents bewails the fact that all the sacrifices made by the Congress to see India free has resulted in this. The Congress today is falling. Everyone in the Congress today wants to become an M. L. A. Those who succeed do not work for the country but only for themselves. An M. L. A. gets quite a sizable salary—I do not recollect how much—but it is quite adequate for one’s necessities. The correspondent says that the M. L. As nevertheless are corrupt and they harass civil servants and try to browbeat them into doing their bidding. In this way both suffer morally—civil servants as well as those who call themselves our representatives. The elder correspondent suggests that I should go and live in Andhra and see how things are. But I have lived not only among Andhras but among all classes of people. To me people of every province are Indians even if they speak different languages. If someone says that he belongs to Andhra and has nothing to do with the rest of the country, I too shall have nothing to



do with him. He says the rot is spreading amongst us. The more people we return to the assemblies, the greater the amount of filth. The fewer there are the less filth there will be. He therefore suggests that we should reduce the number of M. L. A.s because they do not in any case represent the people. They go into the assemblies to serve their self-interest. They even try to capture the Congress. Then there are others who call themselves Communists or Socialists. They also feel all-important and talk about capturing the whole of India. But who will control India? Socialists and Communists and Congressmen are all Indians. Let us not say that India is ours. Let us rather say that we belong to India. If we make India our own, we must do so not to further our self-interest, not to enrich our relatives or to provide them jobs but to serve.

The women are talking. This is very bad. If you must talk, then come to the dais and make a speech from here. Maybe they do not hear a word of what I am saying. They do not come here to listen. They come here because they have nothing else to do.

A few Muslims came to see me today. They say they have been and still are nationalist Muslims and Congressmen. They say formerly Congressmen had great regard for them but now they have fallen in their eyes. If the Congressmen think so little of them, they should ask them to go and they will go. Let the Government say so, too. In that way they will be spared the assaults and the humiliation that are their lot. Those who met me did not speak only for themselves. They represented all the Muslims. I advised them to keep calm and assured them that the Government was doing all it could. We would see what to do if it failed. Today we must forget that we are Hindus or Sikhs or Muslims or Parsis. If we want to conduct the affairs of India properly we must be only Indians. It is of no consequence by what name we call God in our homes. In the work of the nation, all Indians of all faiths are one. If Hindus say that they will kill Muslims or will not permit them to live in India they will be committing suicide and the Muslims will be spared the trouble of killing the Hindus. We cannot commit suicide. We are Indians and we must lay down our lives in protecting Hindus, Muslims, Parsis, Sikhs and all others.

[From Hindi]; Courtesy: All India Radio. Also Prarthana Pravachan—II, pp. 288-90



108. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

(As Gandhiji was observing silence, his speech written in English was translated into Hindi and read out after the prayers.)

NEW DELHI,

January 12, 1948

One fasts for health's sake under laws governing health or fasts as a penance for a wrong done and felt as such. In these fasts, the fasting one need not believe in ahimsa. There is, however, a fast which a votary of non-violence sometimes feels impelled to undertake by way of protest against some wrong done by society and this he does when he, as a votary of ahimsa, has no other remedy left.

Such an occasion has come my way. When on September 9 I returned to Delhi from Calcutta, I was to proceed to West Punjab. But that was not to be. Gay Delhi looked a city of the dead. As I alighted from the train I observed gloom on every face. I saw even the Sardar, whose humour and the joy that humour gives never desert, was no exception this time.

The cause of it I did not know. He was on the platform to receive me. He lost no time in giving me the sad news of the disturbances that had taken place in the metropolis of the Union. At once I saw that I had to be in Delhi and do or die.

There is apparent calm brought about by prompt military and police action. But there is a storm within the breast. It may burst forth any day. This I count as no fulfilment of the vow to "do" which alone can keep me from death, the incomparable friend. I yearn for heart friendship between Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims. It subsisted between them the other day. Today it is non-existent. It is a state that no Indian patriot worthy of the name can contemplate with equanimity.

Though the voice within has been beckoning for a long time, I have been shutting my ears to it lest it might be the voice of Satan, otherwise called my weakness. I never like to feel resourceless; a satyagrahi never should. Fasting is his last resort in the place of the sword—his or others.

I have no answer to return to the Muslim friends who see me from day to day as to what they should do. My impotence has been gnawing at me of late. It will go immediately if the fast is undertaken. I have been brooding over it for the last three



days. The final conclusion has flashed upon me and it makes me happy. (1 Gandhiji had given no inkling of what was in his mind to his close associates—not even to Vallabhbhai Patel and Jawaharlal Nehru who had met him shortly before this announcement at the prayer meeting. This was the fifteenth fast to be undertaken by Gandhiji.) No man, if he is pure, has anything more precious to give than his life. I hope and pray that I have that purity in me to justify the step. I ask you all to bless the effort and to pray for me and with me.

The fast begins from the first meal tomorrow (Tuesday). The period is indefinite and I may drink water with or without salts and sour limes. It will end when and if I am satisfied that there is a reunion of hearts of all communities brought about without any outside pressure, but from an awakened sense of duty.

The reward will be the regaining of India's dwindling prestige and her fast-fading sovereignty over the heart of Asia and there-through the world. I flatter myself with the belief that the loss of her soul by India will mean the loss of the hope of the aching, storm-tossed and hungry world. Let no friend or foe, if there be one, be angry with me. There are friends who do not believe in the method of the fast for reclamation of the human mind. They will bear with me and extend to me the same liberty of action that they claim for themselves.

With God as my supreme and sole counsellor, I felt that I must take the decision without any other adviser. If I have made a mistake and discover it, I shall have no hesitation in proclaiming it from the house-top and retracing my faulty step. There is little chance of me making such a discovery. If there is a clear indication, as I claim there is, of the Inner Voice, it will not be gainsaid. I plead for all absence of argument and inevitable endorsement of the step. If the whole of India responds or at least Delhi does, the fast might be soon ended.

But whether it ends soon or late or never, let there be no softness in dealing with what may be termed as a crisis. Critics have regarded some of my previous fasts as coercive and held that on merits the verdict would have gone against my stand but for the pressure exercised by the fasts.

What value can an adverse verdict have when the purpose is demonstrably sound? A pure fast, like duty, is its own reward. I do not embark upon it for the sake of the result it may bring. I do so because I must. Hence I urge everybody dispassionately to examine the purpose and let me die, if I must, in peace which I hope is ensured. Death for me would be a glorious deliverance rather than that I should be



a helpless witness of the destruction of India, Hinduism, Sikhism and Islam. That destruction is certain if Pakistan does not ensure equality of status and security of life and property for all professing the various faiths of the world and if India copies her. Only then Islam dies in the two Indias, not in the world. But Hinduism and Sikhism have no world outside India. Those who differ from me will be honoured by me for their resistance however implacable. Let my fast quicken conscience, not deaden it.

Just contemplate the rot that has set in in beloved India and you will rejoice to think that there is a humble son of hers who is strong enough and possibly pure enough to take the happy step. If he is neither, he is a burden on earth. The sooner he disappears and clears the Indian atmosphere of the burden, the better for him and all concerned.

I would beg of all friends not to rush to Birla House nor try to dissuade me or be anxious for me. I am in God's hands. Rather they should turn the searchlight inwards, for this is essentially a testing-time for all of us. Those who remain at their post of duty and perform it diligently and well, now more so than hitherto, will help me and the cause in every way. The fast is a process of self- purification.

I told you yesterday of two letters from Andhra. One was from the aged friend, no other than Deshabhakta Konda Venkatappayyagaru. I give here extracts from it:

The one great problem, apart from many other political and economic issues of a very complicated nature, is the moral degradation into which the men in Congress circles have fallen. I cannot say much about other provinces but in my province the conditions are very deplorable. The taste of political power has turned their heads. Several of the M. L. A.s and M. L. C.s are following the policy of making hay while the sun shines, of making money by the use of influence, even to the extent of obstructing the administration of justice in the criminal courts presided over by magistrates. Even the District Collectors and other revenue officials do not feel free in the discharge of their duties on account of the frequent interference by the M. L. A.s and M. L. C.s on behalf of their partisans. A strict and honest officer cannot hold his position, for false reports are carried against him to the Ministers who easily lend their ears to these unprincipled self-seekers.

Swaraj was the only all-absorbing passion which goaded men and women to follow your leadership. But now that the goal had been reached, all moral



restrictions have lost their power on most of the fighters in the great struggle, who are joining hands even with those who were sworn opponents of the national movement and who, now, for their personal ends enlist themselves as Congress members. The situation is growing intolerable every day with the result that the Congress as well as the Congress Government have come into disrepute.

The recent municipal elections in Andhra have proved how far and how fast the Congress is losing its hold upon the people. The municipal elections in the town of Guntur were suddenly ordered to be stopped by an urgent message from the Minister for Local Bodies (Madras) after every preparation was made for carrying on election. Only a nominated council was in power for, I believe, the last ten years or more and for nearly a year now the municipal administration has been in the hands of a commissioner. Now the talk prevails that the Government would soon nominate councillors to take charge of the municipal affairs of this town.

I, old, decrepit, with a broken leg, slowly limping on crutches within the walls of my house, have no axe to grind. I no doubt entertain certain strong views against some of the leading Congressmen in the two parties into which the members of the Provincial and District Congress Committees now stand divided. And I have made no secret of my views.

The factions in the Congress circles, the money-making activities of several of the M. L. A.s and M. L. C.s and the weakness of the Ministers have been creating a rebellious spirit among the people at large. The people have begun to say that the British Government was much better and they are even cursing the Congress.

Let the people of Andhra and the other provinces measure the words of this self-sacrificing servant of India. As he rightly says the corruption described by him is no monopoly of Andhra. He could only give first-hand evidence about Andhra. Let us beware.

My Bahawalpur friends, I have to ask you to be patient. Sardar Saheb saw me only at noon. Being silent and preoccupied I could say or write nothing. Shri Shanker (V. Shankar, Private Secretary to Vallabhbhai Patel) from his office was too busy to come so



that I could not place your case before him and possibly save the Sardar's precious time. (Gandhiji visited Lord Mountbatten after the prayers.)

The Hindustan Times, 13-1-1948, and Harijan, 18-1-1948



109. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

(The gathering at the prayer meeting was much larger than usual.)

NEW DELHI,

January 13, 1948

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

Today I may not finish my speech in 15 minutes as usual, as I have much to say.

Today I have come to the prayer meeting because for the first twenty-four hours after beginning a fast the body does not feel it or should not feel it. I began eating at half past nine this morning. People kept coming and talking to me. (Vallabhbhai Patel was with Gandhiji for nearly 45 minutes. Prominent among the callers were Abul Kalam Azad, Jairamdas Doulatram, H. S. Suhrawardy and Dr. Jivraj Mehta.) I finished eating a little before eleven. (Prayers were held at 11 a. m. as Gandhiji commenced his fast.) So I have been able to come to the meeting and this is not surprising. Today I can walk about and sit up and I have also done some work. From tomorrow there will be some change. Rather than coming here and not speaking, I might as well sit in my room and think. If I have to utter the name of God, I can do it there. I therefore feel that I shall not be coming to the prayer meeting from tomorrow. But if you do wish to join in the prayer you may come if you feel like it. The girls will come and sing the prayer. At least one of them will come. I have told you my programme in case you should feel disappointed at my not coming.

I had written down yesterday's speech and it has been published in the newspapers. Now that I have started my fast many people cannot understand what I am doing, who are the offenders—Hindus or Sikhs or Muslims. How long will the fast last? I say I do not blame anyone. Who am I to accuse others? I have said that we have all sinned. That does not mean that any one particular man has sinned. Hindus in trying to drive out the Muslims are not following Hinduism. And today it is both Hindus and Sikhs who are trying to do so. But I do not accuse all the Hindus and Sikhs because not all of them are doing it. People should understand this. If they do not, my purpose will not be realized and the fast too will not be terminated. If I do not survive the fast, no one is to be blamed. If I am proved unworthy, God will take me away. People ask me if my fast is intended for the cause of the Muslims. I admit that that is so. Why? Because Muslims here today have lost everything in the world. Formerly they could depend on the Government. There was also the Muslim League. Today the Muslim



League is no longer there. The League got the country partitioned and even after the partition there are large numbers of Muslims here. I have always held that those who have been left behind in India should be given all help. It is only humanity.

Mine is a fast of self-purification. Everyone should purify himself. If not, the situation cannot be saved. If everyone is to purify himself, Muslims will also purify themselves. Everyone should cleanse his heart. No one should find fault with the Muslims whatever they may do. If I confess before someone that I have done wrong, then it is a kind of atonement.

I do not say this in order to appease the Muslims or anyone else. I want to appease myself which means that I want to appease God. I do not want to be a sinner against God. Muslims also must become pure and live peacefully in India. What happened was that for election purposes Hindus and Sikhs recognized the Muslim League. I shall not go into that history. Then followed the partition. But before partition became a fact the hearts had already become divided. Muslims were also at fault here, though we cannot say that they alone were at fault. Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims, all are to blame. Now all of them have to become friends again. Let them look to God, not to Satan. Among the Muslims too there are many who worship Satan. Among the Hindus and the Sikhs many worship not Nanak and other Gurus, but Satan. In the name of religion we have become irreligious.

Since I have undertaken the fast in the cause of the Muslims, a great responsibility has come to devolve on them. They must understand that if they are to live with the Hindus as brothers they must be loyal to the Indian Union, not to Pakistan. I shall not ask them whether they are loyal or not. I shall judge them by their conduct.

Then the name of the Sardar is being mentioned. The Muslims say that I am good, but the Sardar is not and he must be removed. They say that Jawaharlal too is good. They say if I join the Government it will be a good thing. They object only to the Sardar. I must tell the Muslims that their argument serves no purpose, because the Government is the whole Cabinet, neither the Sardar nor Jawahar by himself. They are your servants. You can remove them. Yes, Muslims alone cannot remove them. But at least they can bring to the Sardar's notice any mistakes which in their opinion he commits. It will not do merely to criticize him by quoting some statement or other he might have made. You must say what he has done. You must tell me. I meet him often and I shall bring it to his notice. Jawaharlal can dismiss him and if he does not, there must be some reason. He praises the Sardar. (The report in The Hindustan Times here adds:



“The Sardar had not ceased to be his (Gandhiji’s) esteemed friend though he was no longer his ‘yes man’ as he was once popularly and affectionately nick-named.”) Then the Government is responsible for whatever the Sardar does. You too are responsible for he is your representative. That is how things go in a democracy. Therefore I shall say that the Muslims must become brave and fearless. They should also become God-fearing. They must think that for them there is no League, no Congress, no Gandhi, no Jawaharlal but only God, that they are here in the name of God. Let them not take offence at whatever Hindus and Sikhs may do. I am with them. I want to live and die with them. If I cannot keep you united, my life is worthless. The Muslims thus carry a great responsibility. They must not forget this.

The Sardar is blunt of speech. What he says sometimes sounds bitter. The fault is in his tongue. I can testify that his heart is not like his tongue. He has said in Lucknow (Addressing a public meeting at Lucknow on January 6, Vallabhbhai Patel had said: “I want to ask the Indian Muslims only one question. In the recent All-India Muslim Conference why did you not open your mouths on the Kashmir issue? Why did you not condemn the action of Pakistan? These things create doubt in the minds of people. . . . So I want to say a word as a friend of Muslims. It is our duty now to sail in the same boat and sink or swim. I want to tell you very clearly that you cannot ride two horses. You select one horse, whichever you like better.”) and in Calcutta (Speaking at a mammoth gathering at Calcutta on January 3, Vallabhbhai Patel had emphasized that there could be no serious talk of a Hindu State. But one fact was indisputable. There were 4.5 crores of Muslims in India many of whom had helped the creation of Pakistan. How could one believe that they would change overnight. “The Muslims said they were loyal citizens, and therefore, why should anybody doubt their bona fides? To them we would say: ‘Why do you ask us? Search your own conscience’.”) that all Muslims should live here and can live here. He also told me that he could not trust those Muslims who till the other day followed the League and considered themselves enemies of Hindus and Sikhs and who could not have changed overnight and suddenly become friends. If the League is still there who will they obey, Pakistan or our Government? The League’s persistence in its old attitude makes him suspect it, and rightly so. He says that he no longer has faith in the bona fides of the League Muslims and he cannot trust them. Let them prove that they can be trusted. Then I have the right to tell the Hindus and Sikhs what they should do.

The song (With the refrain *Ekla chalo re*—Walk thou alone) these girls sang was composed by Gurudev. We sang it during our tours in Noakhali. A man walking alone calls to others to come and join him. But if no one comes and it is dark, the Poet says, the man should walk alone because God is already with him. I asked the girls especially to sing this song which is in Bengali. Otherwise they would have sung only Hindustani



songs. The Hindus and Sikhs should cultivate this attitude if they are true to their religions. They should not generate an atmosphere in which the Muslims should be compelled to flee to Pakistan. Hindus and Sikhs should become brave and show that even if all the Hindus and Sikhs in Pakistan were to be killed there would be no retaliation in India. I do not want to live to see our people copy Pakistan. If I am to live I shall ask every Hindu and every Sikh not to touch a single Muslim. It is cowardice to kill Muslims and we must become brave and not cowards.

I shall terminate the fast only when peace has returned to Delhi. If peace is restored to Delhi it will have effect not only on the whole of India but also on Pakistan and when that happens, a Muslim can walk around in the city all by himself. I shall then terminate the fast. Delhi is the capital of India. It has always been the capital of India. So long as things do not return to normal in Delhi, they will not be normal either in India or in Pakistan. Today I cannot bring Suhrawardy here because I fear someone may insult him. Today he cannot walk about in the streets of Delhi. If he did he would be assaulted. What I want is that he should be able to move about here even in the dark. It is true that he made efforts in Calcutta only when Muslims became involved. Still, he could have made the situation worse, if he had wanted, but he did not want to make things worse. He made the Muslims evacuate the places they had forcibly occupied and said that he being the Premier could do so. Although the places occupied by the Muslims belonged to Hindus and Sikhs he did his duty. Even if it takes a whole month to have real peace established in Delhi it does not matter. People should not do anything merely to have me terminate the fast.

So my wish is that Hindus, Sikhs, Parsis, Christians and Muslims who are in India should continue to live in India and India should become a country where everyone's life and property are safe. Only then will India progress.

[From Hindi]; Courtesy: All India Radio. Also Prarthana Pravachan—II, pp. 293-300



110. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

NEW DELHI,

January 14, 1948

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

Yesterday I said I might not be able to come to the meeting today. But I have managed it. However, from tomorrow or the day after I may not be in a condition to move about. Doctors have advised me to rest from today. (Gandhiji spent the second day of his fast as per his normal routine except for the morning and evening walks. He took hot water without salt or lime, participated in two meetings with the Cabinet Ministers and received a deputation of refugees from the N. W. F. P., besides a number of visitors and friends. Drs. Jivraj Mehta and Sushila Nayyar issued a health bulletin that each day's fast increased both immediate and future danger to Gandhiji's life.) I have placed myself not in the hands of the doctors but in the hands of God. I have no such attachment for life that I must live under any circumstances. Whether I die or live is wholly in the hands of God. I can only pray that my faith may remain firm and no one may interfere in my acting on that faith. Today man has become weak. He asks: Where is God? I want everyone to become strong. Only then can we escape misery. The few things I wanted to say to you I had in fact dictated in English, because I was not sure what my physical condition would be. I thought if I could not speak to you, a translation of the message could be read out. It was intended not only for you but for the millions in the country who would hear it on the radio and those who want to hear in my own voice what I have to say. I am a prisoner of their love and I thought that they had better hear my own voice today. I feel that a thirty-six hours' fast is very useful physically. It cleanses the body and can cause no harm. True, I have to conserve my energy for the future but God will see to that. I have been receiving many telegrams from all quarters—a lot of them from Muslims. I have also had cablegrams from outside India. I have told Pyarelal to pick out the most relevant of them. Not all need be published; only the few that can teach something to the people should be published. There are others which say that I should give up the fast and all will be well. But how can I give up the fast? God inspired the fast and He alone may terminate it. I have a telephonic message from Mridulabehn. She is in Lahore. She has a large number of friends among Muslims. She is a Hindu girl. The fast has distressed her. I carried her in my arms when she was a little girl. Now she has grown up. She goes about everywhere all by herself. She says Muslims, even officers in the Pakistan Government are asking her what they can do for me, now that



I am doing what I am doing for their sake. This pleased me. I do not know whether my message has reached them. By tomorrow it will certainly reach them. My answer is that there is no need for them to ask. Although this yajna is being performed in Delhi it is for the whole country.

The fast is for self-purification. You must have God enthroned where today Satan sits enthroned. There must be some indication of it. Everybody cannot undertake a fast. It has become my proud privilege to do so. If everyone had this privilege they would have lived in amity. Hindus say, 'Kill the Muslims.' Muslims say, 'Kill the Hindus.' Sikhs say, 'Kill the Muslims.' If Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs fight in this way it helps no one. If you want to participate in the yajna, you must become brothers and should have love instead of hate in your hearts. Let all Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs pledge that they will not touch liquor, they will not touch opium. They will have nothing to do with adulterous men and adulterous women. Everyone will look upon other women as mothers or sisters or daughters. Everyone must exercise self-restraint and become clean. If they do all these things and if even then I regard Pakistan as full of sin, I will have to repent and say that Pakistan is not a land of sin but a land of purity. But what is needed is action, not mere words. If the Muslims of Pakistan become thus transformed, it is bound to have an effect in India. I have never tried to hide my view that Pakistan has committed crimes against Hindus.

What has happened in Karachi? Innocent Sikhs were murdered and their properties looted. Now I understand the same thing has happened in Gujrat. (On January 13, a train carrying non-Muslim refugees from Bannu was attacked at the Gujrat (West Punjab) Station by the tribesmen who had assembled there on their way to Jammu. In spite of the heroic defence put up by the troops escorting the train, hundreds of refugees were killed or maimed and women and girls abducted by the tribesmen.) There was a caravan coming from Bannu or somewhere. They were all refugees running away to save their lives. They were waylaid and cut down. I do not want to relate this grim tale. I ask the Muslims if in their name this kind of thing continues in Pakistan, how long will the people in India tolerate it. Even if a hundred men like me fasted they would not be able to stop the tragedy that may follow. You should all become good. Whether you are Muslims or tribals, you must all say that you will have the Hindus and Sikhs back. The poet says, "If there is paradise it is here, it is here." He had said it about a garden. I read it ages ago when I was a child. But paradise is not so easily secured. If Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs became decent, became brothers, then that verse could be inscribed on every door. But that will be only when Pakistan has become pure. But if you say one thing and do another,



the place will become another hell. Cleanse your hearts and install God there. If that happens in Pakistan, we in India shall not be behind them. It does not matter that the country is geographically divided, so long as our hearts are one. There are so many different governments in the world. What does it matter if there are fifty or five hundred? There are seven hundred thousand villages in India. If each one of them had a government of their own it would be a good thing.

They tell me that I am mad and have a habit of going on fast on the slightest pretext. But I am made that way. When I was young I never even read the newspapers. I could read English with difficulty and my Gujarati was not satisfactory. I have had the dream ever since then that if the Hindus, Sikhs, Parsis, Christians and Muslims could live in amity not only in Rajkot but in the whole of India, they would all have a very happy life. If that dream could be realized even now when I am an old man on the verge of death, my heart would dance. Children would then frolic in joy to see that there is no strife any more. I urge all of you to help me in this task. If we all persevere in our respective religions and become good there can be harmony between all religions. We must not fear whether a man is a Sikh or a Pathan. We must fear God. This is what I want to see.

You can all try and become such men. What after all is society? Society is made up of individuals. It is we that make society. We are asleep and then say that we are helpless because society is such. The same goes for the Government. It is we who are the Government. If one man takes the initiative others will follow and one can become many; if there is not even one there is nothing.

I am not sure that I shall be able to come here tomorrow. But the prayers will be held and the girls will sing the bhajans.

[From Hindi]; Courtesy: All India Radio. Also Prarthana Pravachan-II, pp. 300-4



111. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

(The opening two paragraphs were spoken by Gandhiji, as he lay in bed, on the microphone in Hindi. The rest of the speech had been dictated earlier in English to Pyarelal. Sushila Nayyar read out the speech in Hindi at the prayer meeting. The report in The Hindustan Times has been collated with the Hindi version in Prarthana Pravachan).

NEW DELHI,

January 15, 1948

BROTHER AND SISTERS,

This is a new experience for me. I have never so far had occasion to convey my word thus to the people. I cannot go to the prayer ground and my voice from here cannot reach you. Even so I thought that if you could hear my voice you would feel reassured. I have already dictated what I have to say. I do not know for how long this state will continue. (The doctors who examined Gandhiji issued the following bulletin at 4.30 pm. "Today is the third day of Gandhiji's fast. He is naturally losing weight. The weakness has considerably increased. He had to be carried out of the bathroom in an arm-chair this morning. His voice is feeble. Acetone bodies have appeared in the urine...")

My request to you is that none of you should think what other is doing, but each of you should examine your own self and purify yourself to the extent you can. I am convinced that if people in large numbers purify themselves it will do them a lot of good and it will also do me good. India then will benefit and maybe I shall be able to give up my fast sooner. Let no one be concerned about me. Let everyone be concerned for himself. You must give thought to the progress of the country and the welfare of the people. In the end all men have to die. He who is born cannot escape death. Why then should we fear death or grieve over it? It is my belief that death is a friend to whom we should be grateful, for it frees us from the manifold ills which are our lot.

Newspapermen sent me a message two hours after my prayer speech of last evening, asking to see me as they had some doubts to be cleared. After a heavy day's work I felt disinclined out of exhaustion to see them for discussion. I, therefore, told Pyarelal to inform them to excuse me and further tell them that they should put down the questions in writing and send them to me next morning. They have done so.

Q. You have undertaken the fast when there was no disturbance of any kind in any part of the Indian Dominion.



What was it if it was not a disturbing disturbance for a crowd to make an organized and a determined attempt to take forcible possession of Muslim houses? (Vide “Speech at Prayer Meeting”, 4-1-1948.) The disturbance was such that the military had to reluctantly resort to tear-gas and even to a little shooting if only in the air, before the crowd dispersed. It would have been foolish for me to wait till the last Muslim had been turned out of Delhi by subtle undemonstrative methods, which I would describe as killing by inches.

Q. You have stated that you could not give any reply to the Muslims who came to you with their tale of fear and insecurity and who have complained that Sardar Patel, who is in charge of the Home Affairs, is anti-Muslim. You have also stated that Sardar Patel is no longer a “yes-man” as he used to be. (Vide “Speech at Prayer Meeting”, 13-1-1948.)

These factors create the impression that the fast is more intended to bring about a change of heart in the Sardar and thereby amounts to a condemnation of the policy of the Home Ministry. It would be helpful if you can clear the position.

As to this I feel that my reply was precise, not admitting more interpretations than one. The suggested interpretation never crossed my mind. If I had known that my statement could bear any such interpretation, I would have dispelled the doubt in anticipation. Many Muslim friends had complained of the Sardar’s so-called anti-Muslim attitude. I had, with a degree of suppressed pain, listened to them without giving any explanation. The fast freed me from the self-imposed restraint and I was able to assure the critics that they were wrong in isolating him from Pandit Nehru and me, whom they gratuitously raise to the sky. This isolation did them no good. The Sardar has a bluntness of speech which sometimes unintentionally hurts, though his heart is expansive enough to accommodate all. Thus my statement was meant deliberately to free a lifelong and faithful comrade from any unworthy reproach. (3 Expressing his anguish, Vallabhbhai Patel had written to Gandhiji on January 13, “. . . you have again and again to take up cudgels on my behalf. This ... is intolerable to me.” Again on January 16 he said in Bombay that some Muslims went to Gandhiji and complained about his Lucknow speech and “Gandhiji felt compelled to defend me. That also pained me, for after all I am not a weak person who should be defended by others.”)

Lest my hearers should run away with the idea that my compliment carried the meaning that I could treat the Sardar as my “yes-man”, as he was affectionately



described, I balanced the compliment by adding the proviso that he was too masterful to be anybody's "yes-man".

When he was my "yes-man", he permitted himself to be so named, because whatever I said instinctively appealed to him. Great as he was in his own field and a very able administrator, he was humble enough to begin his political education under me because, as he explained to me, he could not take to the politics in vogue at the time I began my public career in India. When power descended on him, he saw that he could no longer successfully apply the method of nonviolence which he used to wield with signal success.

I have made the discovery that what I and the people with me had termed non-violence was not the genuine article but a weak copy known as passive resistance. Naturally, passive resistance can avail nothing to a ruler. Imagine a weak ruler being able to represent any people. He would only degrade his masters who, for the time being, had placed themselves under his trust. I know that the Sardar could never betray or degrade his trust.

I wonder if with a knowledge of this background to my statement, anybody would dare call my fast a condemnation of the policy of the Home Ministry. If there is any such person, I can only tell him that he would degrade and hurt himself, never the Sardar or me. Have I not before now said emphatically that no outside power can really degrade a man? Only he can degrade himself.

Though I know that this sentence is irrelevant here, it is such a truth that it bears repetition on all occasions. My fast, as I have stated in plain language, is undoubtedly on behalf of the Muslim minority in the Union and, therefore, it is necessarily against the Hindus and Sikhs of the Union and the Muslims of Pakistan.

It is also on behalf of the minorities in Pakistan as in the case of the Muslim minority in the Union. This is a clumsy compression of the idea I have already explained. I cannot expect the fast taken by a very imperfect and weak mortal, as I truly confess I am, to have the potency to make its proteges proof against all danger. The fast is a process of self-purification for all. It would be wrong to make any insinuation against the purity of the step.

Q. Your fast has been undertaken on the eve of the meeting of the United Nations Security Council (Gopalaswami Ayyangar, leader of the Indian Delegation to U. N. O., opened the debate on the Kashmir issue in the United Nations Security Council on January 15.) and



so soon after the Karachi riot and Gujrat massacre. What publicity the latter incidents received in the foreign Press is not known, but undoubtedly your fast has overshadowed all other incidents and Pakistan representatives would not be worth their past reputation if they do not seize the opportunity to declare that the Mahatma has undertaken the fast to bring sanity among his Hindu followers, who have been making the life of the Muslims in India impossible.

Truth takes a long time to reach the four corners of the globe. But in the meantime your fast may have the unfortunate effect of prejudicing our cause in the eyes of the United Nations.

This question does not demand or need any elaborate answer.

From all I have known of the powers and peoples outside India, I make bold to say that the fast has created only a healthy impression. Outsiders who are able to take an impartial and unbiased view of what is happening in India cannot distort the purpose of the fast, which is meant to bring sanity to all those who inhabit both the Union and Pakistan.

It is impossible to save the Muslims in the Union if the Muslim majority in Pakistan do not behave as decent men and women. Happily for the cause, the Muslims of Pakistan, as Mridulabehn's inquiry of yesterday made clear, have become wide awake to a sense of their duty. The United Nations know that my fast aids them to come to a right decision and to give the right guidance to the two newly-made Dominions. (In response to popular demand Gandhiji's cot was placed in the verandah and as men and women filed past him, Gandhiji acknowledged their greetings with folded hands.)

The Hindustan Times, 16-1-1948, Harijan, 25-1-1948 and Prarthana Pravachan— II, pp. 304-5



112. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

NEW DELHI,

January 16, 1948

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

I had not hoped to be able to speak to you today. But you will be glad to know that today by God's grace I feel my voice is stronger than it was yesterday. During all my previous fasts I never felt as strong as I am feeling today on the fourth day of the fast. My hope is that if you will continue the yajna of self-purification my strength to address you can remain to the end. I may say that I am in no hurry at all. Hurry will not help our work. I feel ineffable peace. I do not want anyone to do anything incompletely and tell me that everything is all right. When there is perfect peace in Delhi there will be peace all over India. I have no wish to live if I cannot see peace established all round me, in India as well as in Pakistan. This is the meaning of this yajna. (Lying in bed Gandhiji spoke this in Hindi on the microphone. What follows had been dictated earlier in English and its translation in Hindi was read out at the prayer meeting. The report in Harijan has been collated with the Hindi version in Prarthana Pravachan.)

It is never a light matter for any responsible Cabinet to alter a deliberate settled policy. (For the Government's earlier stand, regarding the payment of cash balances to Pakistan as enunciated by Vallabhbhai Patel, vide Appendix "Vallabhbhai Patel's Statement to the Press", 12-1-1948.) Yet our Cabinet, responsible in every sense of the term, has with equal deliberation yet promptness unsettled their settled fact. (For the Government communique regarding the latest decision, vide Appendix "Government Communique", 16-1-1948.) They deserve the warmest thanks from the whole country, from Kashmir to Cape Comorin and from Karachi to the Assam frontier. And I know that all the nations of the earth will proclaim this gesture as one which only a large-hearted Cabinet like ours could rise to. This is no policy of appeasement of the Muslims. This is a policy, if you like, of self-appeasement. No Cabinet worthy of being representative of a large mass of mankind can afford to take any step merely because it is likely to win the hasty applause of an unthinking public. In the midst of insanity, should not our best representatives retain sanity and bravely prevent a wreck of the ship of State under their management? What then was the actuating motive? It was my fast. It changed the whole outlook. Without the fast they could not go beyond what the law permitted and required them to do. But the present gesture on the part of the Government of India is one of unmixed



goodwill. It has put the Pakistan Government on its honour. It ought to lead to an honourable settlement not only of the Kashmir question, but of all the differences between the two Dominions. Friendship should replace the present enmity. Demands of equity supersede the letter of the law. There is a homely maxim of law which has been in practice for centuries in England that when common law seems to fail, equity comes to the rescue. Not long ago there were even separate courts for the administration of law and of equity. Considered in this setting, there is no room for questioning the utter justice of this act of the Union Government. If we want a precedent, there is a striking one at our disposal in the form of what is popularly known as the MacDonald Award (The Communal Award which was published on August 8, 1932). That Award was really the unanimous judgment of not only the members of the British Cabinet, but also of the majority of the members of the Second Round Table Conference. It was undone overnight as a result of the fast undertaken in the Yeravda prison. (Gandhiji had gone on fast on September 20, 1932, in protest against the provision of separate electorates for the Depressed Classes. He broke his fast on September 26, following the Poona Pact.)

I have been asked to end the fast because of this great act of the Union Government. I wish I could persuade myself to do so. I know that the medical friends who, of their own volition and at considerable sacrifice, meticulously examine me from day to day are getting more and more anxious as the fast is prolonged. Because of defective kidney function they dread not so much my instantaneous collapse as permanent after-effects of any further prolongation. I did not embark upon the fast after consultation with medical men, be they however able. My sole guide, even dictator, was God, the Infallible and Omnipotent. If He has any further use for this frail body of mine, He will keep it in spite of the prognostications of medical men and women. I am in His hands. Therefore, I hope you will believe me when I say that I dread neither death nor permanent injury even if I survive. But I do feel that this warning of medical friends should, if the country has any use for me, hurry the people up to close their ranks. And like the brave men and women that we ought to be under hard-earned freedom, we should trust even those whom we may suspect as our enemies. Brave people disdain distrust. The letter of my vow will be satisfied if the Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs of Delhi bring about a union, which not even a conflagration around them in all the other parts of India or Pakistan will be strong enough to break. Happily, the people in both the Dominions seem to have instinctively realized that the fittest answer to the fast should be a complete friendship between the two Dominions, such



that members of all communities should be able to go to either Dominion without the slightest fear of molestation. Self-purification demands nothing less. It will be wrong for the two Dominions to put a heavy strain upon Delhi. After all, the inhabitants of Delhi are not superhuman. In the name of the people, our Government has taken a liberal step without counting the cost. What will be Pakistan's counter gesture?1 The ways are many if there is the will. Is it there?2

Harijan, 25-1-1948, and Prarthana Pravachan—II, pp. 309-12



113. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

(1 Over four thousand men and women had assembled for the prayers. The Hindi version in Prarthana Pravachan has been collated with the report in Harijan.)

NEW DELHI,

January 17, 1948

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

God's mercy it is that on this fifth day of the fast I can speak a few words without feeling exhausted. (2 The health bulletin issued on January 17 read: "Mahatma Gandhi is definitely weaker and has begun to feel heavy in the head. This is significant in view of the fact that the kidneys are not functioning well. In our opinion it will be most undesirable to let the fast continue. Therefore it is our duty to tell the people of all communities to take immediate steps to produce the requisite conditions for ending the fast without delay.")

I have dictated the message for today which Sushilabehn will read out to you.

Whatever you do words must be backed by your full mind and heart, or it will avail nothing. You will be making the greatest mistake if you think only of how I am to be kept alive. It is not in any human hand to keep me alive or to kill me. It is in God's hands. I have not the least doubt about it, and no one else should have the least doubt.

The meaning of this fast is that our hearts should be cleansed and awakened. In that alone lies the good of all. Please do nothing out of pity for me. I shall fast for as many days as I can and if it is the will of God that I should die then I shall die.

I know many of my friends are distressed and want me to terminate the fast at once. Today I cannot do so. When the occasion for it comes I shall not persist in the fast. Ahimsa requires us to accept our limitations and not to feel proud. It calls for humility. There is no pride in what I say. There is only pure love in it. (Gandhiji spoke the above in Hindi on the microphone for about three minutes. What follows had been dictated earlier in English and its translation in Hindi was read out at the meeting.)

I repeat what I have said before—nothing is to be done under pressure of the fast. I have observed before that things done under pressure of a fast were undone after the fast was over. If any such thing happens, it would be a tragedy of the highest degree. There is no occasion for it at any time. What a spiritual fast does expect is cleansing of the heart. The cleansing, if it is honest, does not cease to be when the cause which induced it ceases. The cleansing of a wall seen in the form of a white-wash



done to welcome a dear one does not cease when the dear one has come and gone. This material cleansing is bound to require renovation after some time. Cleansing of the heart once achieved only dies with one's death. Apart from this legitimate and laudable pressure, the fast has no other function which can be described as proper.

The number of telegrams coming from Rajas, Maharajas, and common people continues to increase. There are telegrams from Pakistan too. They are good as far as they go. But as a friend and well-wisher I must say to all those who reside in Pakistan and mould its fortunes that they will fail to make Pakistan permanent if their conscience is not quickened and if they do not admit the wrongs for which Pakistan is responsible.

This does not mean that I do not wish for a voluntary reunion, but I wish to remove and resist the idea that Pakistan should be reunited by force of arms. I hope that this will not be misunderstood as a note of discord, whilst I am lying on what is truly a death-bed. I hope all Pakistanis will realize that I would be untrue to them and to myself if out of weakness and for fear of hurting their feelings, I failed to convey to them what I truthfully feel. If I am wrong in my estimate, I should be so told and if I am convinced, I promise that I shall retract what I have said here. So far as I know, the point is not open to question.

My fast should not be considered a political move in any sense of the term. It is in obedience to the peremptory call of conscience and duty. It comes out of felt agony. I call to witness all my numerous Muslim friends in Delhi. Their representatives meet me almost every day to report the day's events. Neither Rajas and Maharajas nor Hindus and Sikhs or any others would serve themselves or India as a whole, if at this, what is to me a sacred juncture, they mislead me with a view to terminating my fast. (Addressing a gathering of three hundred thousand people in Delhi, on January 17, Abul Kalam Azad said: "Before coming here I went to Gandhiji again and asked him what we should do so that he may break his fast. He gave me seven tests which should be fulfilled by the people. Assurances on these points, he said, must come from responsible people who can guarantee the proper fulfilment of these conditions. . . . No false assurance should be given." The conditions were as follows: Complete freedom of worship to Muslims at the tomb of Khwaja Qutub-ud-Din Bakhtiar and non-interference with the celebration of the Urs which was due to be held) Let them know that I feel never so happy as when I am fasting for the spirit. This fast has brought me higher happiness than hitherto. No one need disturb this happy state, unless he can honestly claim that in his journey he has turned deliberately from Satan towards God. (The congregation filed past Gandhiji's room, but they could not have a view of Gandhiji because of his extremely weak



condition. As the prayer meeting ended a mile-long procession of the citizens of Delhi, shouting peace slogans entered the Birla House. Jawaharlal Nehru addressed a few words to them.)

The Hindustan Times, 18-1-1948, Harijan, 25-1-1948, and Prarthana Pravachan—II, pp. 312-3



114. SPEECH BEFORE BREAKING FAST

(Over a hundred representatives of various groups and organizations in Delhi, including Hindu Mahasabha, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, Jamiat-ul-Ulema and others who had assembled earlier at Rajendra Prasad's residence, called on Gandhiji at 11.30 a.m. Prominent among others were Jawaharlal Nehru, Abul Kalam Azad, Rajendra Prasad, Shah Nawaz Khan, Hifzur Rahman and Zaheed Hussain, Pakistan's High Commissioner.

The report in Harijan has been collated with the Hindi version in Dilhiman Gandhiji.)

BIRLA HOUSE, NEW DELHI,

January 18, 1948

Dr. Rajendra Prasad opened the proceedings by narrating to Gandhiji how they had all assembled on the previous night at the former's residence and after full discussion decided to sign the declaration (The seven-point declaration written in the Persian and the Devanagari scripts at Gandhiji instance, read:

"We wish to announce that it is our heart-felt desire that the Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs and members of the other communities should once again live in Delhi like brothers and in perfect amity and we take the pledge that we shall protect the life, property and faith of Muslims and that the incidents which have taken place in Delhi will not happen again.

"We want to assure Gandhiji that the annual fair at Khwaja Qutub-ud-Din Mazar will be held this year as in the previous years.

"Muslims will be able to move about in Subzimandi, Karol Bagh, Paharganj and other localities just as they could in the past.

"The mosques which have been left by Muslims and which now are in the possession of Hindus and Sikhs will be returned. The areas which have been set apart for Muslims will not be forcibly occupied.

"We shall not object to the return to Delhi of the Muslims who have migrated from here if they choose to come back and Muslims shall be able to carry on their business as before.

"We assure that all these things will be done by our personal effort and not with the help of the police or military.

"We request Mahatmaji to believe us and to give up his fast and continue to lead us as he has done hitherto.") then and there. But as representatives of some organizations were not present in that meeting, they felt that they should not go to Gandhiji immediately with the signed document but wait till the remaining signatures were obtained. They had accordingly met again in the morning when all those who were absent during the



previous night's meeting came and gave their signatures. It was found in the course of the morning meeting, Dr. Rajendra Prasad reported, that even those who had some lingering doubts on the previous night were now confident that they could ask Gandhiji with a full sense of their responsibility to break the fast. As the President of the Congress, Dr. Rajendra Prasad said that he had signed the document in view of the guarantee which they had all jointly and severally given. Khurshid, the Chief Commissioner and Randhawa, Deputy Commissioner of Delhi, who were present had signed the document on behalf of the administration. It had been decided to set up a number of committees to implement the pledge. Dr. Rajendra Prasad hoped that Gandhiji would now terminate his fast.

Deshbandhu Gupta, speaking next, described some touching scenes of fraternization between the Hindus and Muslims which he had witnessed when a procession of about 150 Muslims was taken out that morning in Subzimandi and was received with ovation and offered fruit and refreshments by the Hindu inhabitants of that locality.

Gandhiji replying said: (1 Gandhiji was so weak that his voice was hardly audible. Pyarelal and Sushila Nayar repeated aloud his words.) I am happy to hear what you have told me, but if you have overlooked one point all this will be worth nothing. If this declaration means that you will safeguard Delhi and whatever happens outside Delhi will be no concern of yours, you will be committing a grave error and it will be sheer foolishness on my part to break my fast. You must have seen the Press reports of the happenings in Allahabad, if not, look them up. I understand that the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and the Hindu Mahasabha are among the signatories to this declaration. It will amount to breach of faith on their part if they hold themselves responsible for peace in Delhi, but not in other places. I have been observing that this sort of deception is being practised in the country these days on a large scale.

Delhi is the heart—the capital of India. The leaders from the whole of India have assembled here. Men had become beasts. But if those who have assembled here, who constitute the cream among men cannot make the whole of India understand that Hindus, Muslims and followers of other religions are like brothers, it bodes ill for both the Dominions. What will be the fate of India if we continue to quarrel with one another? (Here Gandhiji broke down due to exhaustion.)

I could not finish what I was saying as I was overcome by exhaustion. Let us not take a step that may become a cause for repentance later on. The situation demands



courage of the highest order from us. We have to consider whether or not we can accomplish what we are going to promise. If you are not confident of fulfilling your pledge, do not ask me to give up my fast. It is for you and the whole of India to translate it into reality. It may not be possible to realize it in a day. I do not possess the requisite strength for it. But I can assure you that till today our face was turned towards Satan, we have now resolved to turn towards God. If what I have told you fails to find an echo in your hearts or if you are convinced that it is beyond you, tell me so frankly.

What greater folly can there be than to claim that Hindustan is only for Hindus and Pakistan is for Muslims alone? The refugees here should realize that things in Pakistan will be set right by the example set in Delhi.

I am not one to be afraid of fasting. Time and again I have gone on fasts and if occasion arises I may again do so. Whatever therefore you do, do after careful thought and consideration.

The Muslim friends frequently meet me and assure me that peaceful atmosphere has been restored in Delhi and Hindus and Muslims can live in amity here. If these friends have any misgivings in their hearts and feel that today they have perforce to stay here - as they have nowhere else to go - but ultimately they will have to part company, let them admit it to me frankly. To set things right in the whole of India and Pakistan is no doubt a Herculean task. But I am an optimist. Once I resolve to do something I refuse to accept defeat. Today you assure me that Hindus and Muslims have become one but if Hindus continue to regard Muslims as Yavans and asuras, incapable of realizing God, and Muslims regard Hindus likewise, it will be the worst kind of blasphemy.

A Muslim friend presented me with a book in Patna. Its author is an eminent Muslim. The book says: "God ordains that a kafir — and a Hindu is a kafir — is worse than a poisonous creature. He should be exterminated. It is one's duty to be treacherous to him. Why should one treat him with any courtesy?" If Muslims still harbouring such thoughts assure Hindus about their good behaviour, they will only be deceiving Hindus. If you betray one you betray all.

If I truly worship a stone image I deceive no one. For me God resides in that stone image. I feel that if the hearts of both Hindus and Muslims are full of deceit and treachery, why need I continue to live?



The telegrams I have received today include some from prominent Muslims. They have made me happy. It seems they have realized that the method adopted by them so far was not proper to run a government. After listening to all that I have said, if you still ask me to end my fast I shall end it. Afterwards you have to release me. I had taken the vow to do or die in Delhi and now if I am able to achieve success here I shall go to Pakistan and try to make Muslims understand their folly. Whatever happens in other places, people in Delhi should maintain peace. The refugees here should realize that they have to welcome as brothers the Muslims returning from Pakistan to Delhi. The Muslim refugees in Pakistan are suffering acute hardships and so are the Hindu refugees here. Hindus have not learnt all the crafts of Muslim craftsmen. Therefore they had better return to India. There are good men as well as bad men in all the communities. Taking into consideration all these implications, if you ask me to break my fast I shall abide by your wish. India will virtually become a prison if the present conditions continue. It may be better that you allow me to continue my fast and if God wills it He will call me.

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad remarked that the remarks to which Gandhiji had referred were abhorrent to the teachings of Islam. They were only indicative of the insanity that had late seized some sections of the people.

He was followed by Maulana Hifzur Rahman (Who along with Ahmed Saeed and Habib-ur-Rahman represented the Muslims of Delhi) who categorically repudiated the allegation that his co-religionists did not regard India as their country. They all wanted to remain in India as citizens of India with self-respect and honour. . . .Describing next the change that had come over the city as a result of Gandhiji's fast, he said that they regarded it as a happy augury and a presage of things to come. He joined Dr. Rajendra Prasad in his appeal that Gandhiji should break the fast.

After Ganesh Datt had on behalf of the Hindu Mahasabha and the R. S. S. Who along with Ahmed Saeed and Habib-ur-Rahman represented the Muslims of Delhi reiterated that appeal. . . . Zaheed Hussain addressed a few words to Gandhiji. He was there, he said, to convey to Gandhiji how deeply concerned the people in Pakistan were about him and how they were daily inundating him with anxious inquiries about his (Gandhiji's) health. It was their hearts' desire that circumstances might soon prevail which would enable him to break the fast. If there was anything that he could fittingly do towards that end he was ready and so were the people of Pakistan.



Zaheed Hussain was followed by Khurshid and Randhawa who on behalf of the administration reiterated the assurance that all the conditions mentioned in the citizens' pledge would be duly implemented, and no effort would be spared to restore to the Indian capital its glorious old tradition of communal harmony and peace.

Sardar Harbans Singh endorsed the appeal on behalf of the Sikhs.

Rajendra Prasad again appealed saying: "I have signed on behalf of the people, please break your fast."

Gandhiji said: I shall break my fast. Let God's will prevail. You all be witness today. (This was followed by recitations from the Hindu, Buddhist, Islamic and Parsi scriptures, and singing of a Christian hymn, a bhajan and Ramdhun. Abul Kalam Azad offered a glass of juice to Gandhiji who broke his fast at 12.15 p. m.)

Harijan, 25-1-1948, and Dilhiman Gandhiji—II, pp. 337-42



115. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

(In spite of a drizzle a huge gathering had assembled at the prayer meeting. Gandhiji, lying in bed, spoke in Hindi for about twenty minutes on the microphone. The Hindi version in Prarthana Pravachan has been collated with the report in Harijan.)

NEW DELHI,

January 18, 1948

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

I have dictated a short message for today which Sushila will read out to you.

This is an auspicious day for me and it should be auspicious for you too. This is also the birthday of Guru Govind Singh. On this happy day I terminated the fast. The kindness I have received from the people of Delhi, including the refugees, and from the Government, I shall never forget. I experienced the same love in Calcutta. How can I at this moment forget the great work Shaheed Saheb did in Calcutta? (Vide “Speech at Prayer Meeting”, 13-11-1947.) Had he not been there I could not have stood up there for long. We had quite a few suspicions concerning Shaheed Saheb and we still suspect him. But that should not concern us here. We must learn that however bad a man may be we must treat him as a friend and work with him. We must never under any circumstances treat anyone as an enemy. There is Shaheed Saheb and there are four crores of other Muslims. They are not all angels just as all the Hindus and Sikhs are not angels. There are amongst us good men as well as bad men. Only, bad men are fewer. We also have in our country what are called criminal tribes. We also have aborigines. We have to live with them in harmony. Muslims are a large community. They are not confined to this land but are spread all over the world. If we hope to be friends with the whole world, there is no reason why we should be enemies of the Muslims who are here. I am not a prophet but God has granted me the power of reason and a heart. My reason and my heart tell me that if for some reason or other we are unable to forge friendship between Hindus and Muslims, not only here but also in Pakistan and in the whole world, we shall not be able to keep India for long. It will pass into the hands of others and become a slave country again. Pakistan too will become a slave country and the freedom we have gained will be lost again.

Many people have showered blessings on me today. They have assured me that from now on Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims will live as brothers and under no conditions



and on no provocation will the residents of Delhi, including the refugees, become enemies of each other. This is not a small thing. It means that from now on our endeavour will be to see that the people of Pakistan and India remain friends. Although India has been partitioned because of our weakness we must unite our hearts. If this is not the meaning of my breaking the fast, then I shall humbly say that you have not done a good thing in making me break the fast. The spirit behind the fast must be preserved. What happens in Delhi will happen in the whole of India. And what happens in India will happen in Pakistan. Have no doubt about it. Let no one be afraid, not even a child. So long, in my view, we were heading towards Satan. From now on I hope we shall begin to move towards God. But we must pledge that once we have turned our face towards God we shall never turn away. When that happens India and Pakistan will unitedly be able to serve the world and make the world nobler. I do not wish to live for any other purpose. A man lives only to raise humanity. The only duty of man is to move towards God. One may call Him by any name—God, Khuda or Sat Shri Akal, but if He is not enthroned in one's heart it is all delusion. He is one though called by different names. Then why should we forget Him and become one another's enemies?

I do not want to make a long speech. Let the Hindus take a pledge that they will not give themselves up to strife. I wish that Hindus should read the Koran as they read the Bhagavadgita. Let the Sikhs also do the same. I wish too that Muslim brothers and sisters should keep the Granthsaheb in their homes and try to follow its meaning. Let us uphold another's religion as we uphold our own. A good thing remains a good thing in whatever language it may be written. The Koran is the same to me as the Gita or the Granthsaheb. This has been my principle and whether you believe it or not I have been following it. I tell you clearly that I do not offer worship to a stone, but I am a sanatani Hindu. I do not hate those who worship a stone. God lives even in the stone. He who worships stone sees in it not stone but God. If you do not see God in stone, how can you say that the Koran is a divine scripture? Is this not idol worship? If you learn this we will also learn that there is no difference between Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims. All are brothers and must live together. Then the barbarities that are perpetrated today, like men and women being thrown out of trains, will cease. All will be able to live safely anywhere without fear. I shall never have peace so long as the refugees who have come here from Pakistan do not return to their homes and so long as the Muslims whom we have driven out and who want to return cannot come back and live here in peace.



That is all I have to say. May God grant good sense to us and to all everywhere in the world. May He awaken and draw us all to Him so that India and the world may be happy. (What follows was read out by Sushila Nayyar.)

I embarked on the fast in the name of Truth whose familiar name is God. Without a living Truth God is nowhere. In the name of God we have indulged in lies, massacres of people, without caring whether they were innocent or guilty, men or women, children or infants. We have indulged in abductions, forcible conversions and we have done all this shamelessly. I am not aware if anybody has done these things in the name of Truth. With that same name on my lips I have broken the fast. The agony of our people was unbearable. Rashtrapati Dr. Rajendra Babu brought over a hundred people representing the Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, representatives of the Hindu Mahasabha, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and representatives of refugees from the Punjab, the Frontier Province and Sind. In this very representative company were present Zaheed Hussain, the High Commissioner for Pakistan, the Chief Commissioner of Delhi and the Deputy Commissioner, Gen. Shah Nawaz Khan, representing the Azad Hind Fauj (I.N.A.). Pandit Nehru, sitting like a statue, was of course there, as also Maulana Saheb. Dr. Rajendra Babu read out a document in Hindustani signed by these representatives, asking me not to put any further strain on them and to end the agony by breaking the fast. Telegrams after telegrams have come from Pakistan and the Indian Union urging me to do the same. I could not resist the counsel of all these friends. I could not disbelieve their pledge that, come what may, there would be complete friendship between the Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, Parsis and Jews, a friendship not to be broken. To break that friendship would be to break the nation.

As I write, comforting telegrams are deluging me. How I wish that God will keep me fit enough and sane enough to render the service to humanity that lies in front of me! If the solemn pledge made today is fulfilled, I assure you that it will revive with redoubled force my intense wish and prayer before God that I should be enabled to live the full span of life doing service of humanity till the last moment. That span according to learned opinion is at least one hundred and twenty-five years, some say one hundred and thirty-three. The letter of my vow has been fulfilled beyond expectation through the great goodwill of all the citizens of Delhi, including leaders of the Hindu Mahasabha and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh. The result could not be otherwise when I find that thousands of refugees and others have been fasting since yesterday. Signed assurances of heart-friendship have been pouring in upon me from



thousands. Telegraphic blessings have come from all over the world. Can there be a better sign of God's hand in this act of mine? But beyond the letter of fulfilment of my solemn vow lies its spirit without which the letter killeth. The spirit of the vow is sincere friendship between the Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs of the Union and a similar friendship in Pakistan. If the first is assured, the second must follow, as sure as day follows night. If there is darkness in the Union, it would be folly to expect light in Pakistan. But if the night in the Union is dispelled beyond a shadow of doubt, it cannot be otherwise in Pakistan, nor are signs wanting in that direction. Numerous messages have come from Pakistan, not one of dissent. May God, who is Truth, guide us as He visibly guided us during all these six days.

Harijan, 25-1-1948, and Prarthana Pravachan—II, pp. 314-20



116. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

(Gandhiji was carried in a chair to the prayer ground. It being his silence day, his written speech was read out by Sushila Nayyar after the prayer.)

NEW DELHI,

January 19, 1948

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

My thanks go out to the senders of the numerous wires from all over the world, from Indians and non-Indians, expressing their goodwill and anxiety. These show the correctness of the step I had taken. Not that I had the slightest doubt about it. I had none about this, as I never have had about the reality that God is and that His most graphic name is Truth. Now a stream of wires of congratulations expressing relief. These friends will forgive me for not sending personal acknowledgements. It is physically impossible to do so. I hope too that no such acknowledgment is expected by the senders. I feel constrained to single out two—one from the Premier of West Punjab and the other from the Nawab of Bhopal. They are today labouring under grave distrust. Let the extracted passages speak for themselves. If the senders were not sincere, they would have spared themselves and me on the solemn occasion that the fast was.

Here is the message from the Nawab of Bhopal:

Your appeal for a reunion of hearts of all communities cannot fail to find support from all people of goodwill in both Dominions as will also any appeal for an understanding and friendly relations between India and Pakistan. We, in Bhopal, have been able happily to face our troubles during the past year in a spirit of concord, amity and goodwill between all communities with the result that not a single untoward incident has occurred to mar the peace of the State. We assure you that we shall strive to further this friendly spirit with all the strength at our command.

I give the full text of the wire from the Premier of West Punjab:

West Punjab Ministry expresses deep admiration and sincere appreciation for your great gesture for furtherance of a noble cause. This Ministry has always stood for the principle of doing everything possible to protect the lives, honour



and property of minorities, and giving them equal rights of citizenship. We assure you that this Ministry will follow this policy with redoubled vigour. We are anxious to see an immediate improvement in the situation throughout the Indian sub-continent which may enable you to break your fast. No efforts will be spared in this province to help in saving a life as precious as yours.

In this age of senseless imitation, my warning is that it would be foolish for anybody to embark on such a fast expecting identical results in an identically short space of time. If anyone does, he will face severe disappointment and will discredit what is a hoary and infallible institution. Two severe qualifications are necessary—a living faith in God and a peremptory call from Him. I am tempted to add a third, but it is superfluous. A peremptory call from God within presupposes the rightness, timeliness and propriety of the cause for which the fast is undertaken. It follows that a long previous preparation is required. Let no one, therefore, lightly embark on such a fast.

The citizens of Delhi and the refugees have a heavy task before them. Let them seek occasions for meeting together as often as possible in perfect mutual trust. It was a soul-stirring sight for me to meet Muslim sisters in large numbers yesterday. (Vide “talk with Muslim Women”, 18-1-1948.) Girls in my party told me the sisters were sitting in Birla House uncertain whether they could come to me. They were in purdah, most of them. I asked them to be brought in and they came. I suggested that they would not have the purdah before their fathers or brothers. Why should they think less of me less? And off went the purdah without exception. This is not the first time that the purdah has disappeared before me. I mention the incident to illustrate what genuine love, as I claim mine to be, is able to do.

Hindu and Sikh women should go to the Muslim sisters and establish friendship with them. They should invite them on ceremonial occasions and be invited. Muslim girls and boys should be attracted to common schools, not communal. They should mix in sports. Not only should there be no boycott of Muslims but they should be induced to resume their previous occupations.

Delhi is poorer for the disappearance of the exquisite workmanship of the Muslims. It is a miserable and miserly thing for Hindus and Sikhs to wish to take away from them their means of livelihood. On the one hand, there should be no monopoly and, on the other, there should be no attempt at deprivation. In this great country of ours, there is room for all. The peace committees (A Central Peace Committee was formed



to take effective steps to implement the terms of the written pledge submitted to Gandhiji.) that have been formed must not go to sleep as many committees unfortunately do in all countries. The condition of keeping me in your midst is that all communities in India live at peace with one another, not by force of arms but that of love than which there is no better cement to be found in the world.

Harijan, 25-1-1948, and The Hindustan Times, 20-1-1948



117. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

(Gandhiji was carried in a chair to the prayer meeting. As the microphone was not working and Gandhiji's voice was feeble the substance of his speech was repeated aloud by Sushila Nayyar.)

NEW DELHI,

January 20, 1948

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

The first thing I would say to you is that I hope that those who have signed the document have signed it with God as witness. There are still voices being raised in Calcutta expressing the fear that what has happened here may all be a show. If the people of Delhi and the refugees who have come here stand firm, then whatever may happen outside I am certain they will be able to save India as well as Pakistan. Delhi after all is an ancient city and what is achieved in Delhi is bound to have an impact on the whole of India and Pakistan.

If you read carefully what the Sardar has said in Bombay you will realize there is no rift between Pandit Nehru and the Sardar. They may talk in different ways but they do the same thing. They cannot be enemies of the Muslims. I have no doubt that one who is an enemy of the Muslims is also an enemy of India. Let us realize the truth of this. Elsewhere in the world they have already realized this except perhaps in America where Negroes are still lynched. There are a good many white men there who do not consider this repugnant. They have no shame in their hearts. But elsewhere people do not approve of it. They consider it barbaric. Our own newspapers have described the acts of American whites as barbaric. Though Americans are so much given to reform, they still indulge in such behaviour. We assume we are better people and cannot do such things. And yet, think of what happens here. I would therefore ask your categorical assurance that irrespective of any injustice perpetrated here or elsewhere, you are not going to seek revenge privately, but will leave it to the Government to deal with. If this at least is agreed to, people can move about freely. (At this stage there was a loud explosion. Gandhiji remained unruffled and said to Manu Gandhi, who was visibly shaken: "Why did you get so scared? Some military personnel must have been training in shooting. What will you do if someone really comes to kill us?" He tried to pacify the people and resumed his speech when order was restored.

It was later discovered that a guncotton slab had exploded about 75 feet away from where Gandhiji was sitting and that it was part of a conspiracy to assassinate him. The conspirators had



planned to divert the attention of the people by the explosion. Their original plan to throw a hand-grenade from a servant's room behind the dais having failed, they mixed with the crowd. After the explosion Digambar Badge was to dash to the dais and throw a hand-grenade at Gandhiji, but his courage failed at the last moment. Six of the conspirators, viz., Nathuram Godse, Narayana Apte, Vishnu Karkare, Gopal Godse, Digambar Badge and Shankar Kistayya, escaped in a waiting taxi but Madanlal Pahwa was apprehended.)

I told you it was possible I might go to Pakistan. But I shall go to Pakistan only when the Government invites me as a friend of the Muslims as well as Hindus and the Sikhs. Of course the doctors insist that I must first recoup from the effects of the fast which may take another 15 days and that during the next 15 days I cannot go anywhere or eat anything solid. I can only take a liquid diet which may be milk or fruit juice. Milk can of course sustain a man all his life.

I may tell you that Panditji is a man who will do everything for the refugees. If there is only one dry bed available he will offer it to a refugee to sleep on and himself go without sleep. He says there is no room left in his house and still people keep coming. He is our Prime Minister. He has visitors, some of them Englishmen. Is he to turn them out? And still he says that he will spare for the refugees one or two rooms or whatever he can. If other ministers as well as the army officers follow his example no one will be left unhappy. I congratulate Jawahar and I congratulate you on possessing such a jewel. I am told that wealthy people such as Birla will also do something in this direction. After all when the Prime Minister can do such a thing, why cannot the others? Thus vigorous efforts are being made to alleviate the distress of the refugees. Let us learn from this that we shall not treat Muslims as enemies.

I have a letter. In fact it arrived on January 16 when my fast was in progress. I am told some wicked people forged a great quantity of currency notes and started selling them to the poor. I humbly request the forgers not to indulge in such activities. Can they not find some honest livelihood? I must at the same time warn the poor not to be taken in. They must not forever remain simple and gullible.

I have a wire from Lahore, from the President of the Kashmir Freedom League. He says:

Highly appreciate your magnanimous gesture for Hindu-Muslim unity. Kashmir is the root cause of the present tension and a stumbling-block in the way of any rapprochement. Must receive top priority if peace is actually desired.



Withdrawal of aggressive Indian troops from Kashmir and handing it over to whom it rightfully belongs to is the only satisfactory solution of the problem.

The wire distresses me. If there is no settlement over Kashmir, does it mean that things must continue in their present state? Must Muslims be enemies of Hindus and Sikhs and must Hindus and Sikhs be enemies of Muslims simply on account of Kashmir? Besides, I do not agree that the armed force our Government has dispatched to Kashmir has committed aggression there. The armed force was sent in response to the appeals of Sheikh Abdullah, the Premier of Kashmir, and the Maharaja. It is true that Kashmir should go to whom it belongs. In that case all those who have gone there from outside, be they Afridis or any other, should get out of Kashmir. I cannot object to people in Poonch revolting but I object to their rebelling in order to grab the whole of Kashmir. I can understand it if every outsider leaves Kashmir and no one interferes from outside or sends help or complaints. But I cannot understand it if they say that they themselves will remain in Kashmir but that others should get out. And to whom does Kashmir belong? Right now I shall say it belongs to the Maharaja because the Maharaja still exists. In the eyes of the Government the Maharaja is still the legitimate ruler. Of course if the Maharaja is a wicked man, if he does nothing for the people, I think it is for the Government to displace him. But so far no such eventuality has arisen. If the Muslims of Kashmir say that they do not want the Maharaja, that they want to accede either to India or to Pakistan, no one can complain. I have just emerged from a fast. I am an enemy of none. So how can I be an enemy of Muslims? Let them come and convince me of my error. A Muslim gentleman of Gwalior has sent me a telegram from Ratlam. In it he says:

We Muslim inhabitants Jahangirpur, District Ujjain, Gwalior inform your honour that on 15th and 16th instant our village was surrounded by a Hindu party who beat us severely. Several injured, one died. Our crops and houses were destroyed. Officer of State not taking any action. We are in danger. Kindly arrange urgently.

It was sent on the 15th or the 16th- of January when my fast was going on. If this is true I must tell the Gwalior Hindus that they are going to undo the achievement of Delhi. The correspondent says that those running the administration were of no help to them. But how can this be? If this happens in any part of India, then it is a matter of shame for the Government and for all of us. I hope matters in Gwalior will be put right. I see from the papers that all the Rajas of Kathiawar— there are more than two hundred of them—have met together and decided to merge all their States to form one large State which will have an assembly of its own.¹ If this is true, it is a



great thing. I must congratulate all the Rajas of Kathiawar on this step. In Bhavnagar the Maharaja has handed over all power to the people and has himself become a servant of the people. I congratulate him on this great step.

[From Hindi], Courtesy: All India Radio. Also Prarthana Pravachan—II, pp. 323-7



118. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

NEW DELHI,

January 21, 1948

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

First of all I must ask you to forgive me for being late by ten minutes. I am not well and so could not be punctual. Let me first deal with the bomb incident of yesterday. People have been sending me wires congratulating me and praising me. In fact I deserve no congratulations. I displayed no bravery. I thought it was part of army practice somewhere. I only came to know later that it was a bomb and that it might have killed me if God had not willed it that I should live. But if a bomb explodes in front of me and if I am not scared and succumb, then you will be able to say that I died with a smile on my face. Today I do not yet deserve to be so praised. You should not have any kind of hate against the person who was responsible for this. He had taken it for granted that I am an enemy of Hinduism. Is it not said in chapter IV (verse 8) of the Gita that whenever the wicked become too powerful and harm dharma God sends someone to destroy them? The man who exploded the bomb obviously thinks that he has been sent by God to destroy me. I have not seen him. But I am told that is what he said when questioned by the police. He was well dressed too. But I am sure God is not out of His mind to continue sending such men. If we do not like a man, does it mean that he is wicked? Even if I become wicked in the eyes of everyone I shall not be considered such in the court of God. If then someone kills me, taking me for a wicked man, will he not have to answer before God? Let us pray that God may grant him good sense. It seems he had lodged himself in a mosque. In this he had offended India, God and Hinduism. If everyone thus takes to occupying mosques and, when stopped, assails police officers it will never do. This is not the sort of thing that God will prompt anyone to do. When he says he was doing the bidding of God he is only making God an accomplice in a wicked deed. But it cannot be so. Therefore those who are behind him or whose tool he is, should know that this sort of thing will not save Hinduism. If Hinduism has to be saved it will be saved through such work as I am doing. I have been imbibing Hindu dharma right from my childhood. My nurse, who literally brought me up, taught me to invoke Rama whenever I had any fears. With God's grace, later in life I came in contact with noble and good persons—who were Hindus. I had the good company of Christian and Muslim friends as well, who too could not influence me



otherwise. Therefore having passed all the tests I am as staunch a Hindu today as intuitively I was at the age of five or six. If God deems it fit to make anyone the instrument for saving Hindu dharma, it could be none but me. Do you want to annihilate Hindu dharma by killing a devout Hindu like me?

Some Sikhs came to me and asked me if I suspected that a Sikh was implicated in the deed. I know he was not a Sikh. But what even if he was? What does it matter if he was a Hindu or a Muslim? May God bless him with good sense. I have told the Inspector-General of Police not to harass the man. They should try to win him over. I cannot ask that he should be released because that is not my function. If he can realize that he has committed a crime against Hinduism, against India, against the Muslims and against the whole world, we should not be severe with him. We should pity him. If you all think that my fast was worthless and at the same time you would not let me die because you would not want to take the blame for it, then I think you have deceived me as well as yourselves and what the man did was only right and no sin. If you whole-heartedly disapprove of his action his heart will change of itself, because in this world sin cannot stand by itself. It always wants support. Only God and his devotees are self-sustained. This is the premise from which our non-co-operation is derived. I pray to God to give us enough strength that we may maintain our self-possession and continue the prayer and not budge from our places, even if a bomb should be thrown in our midst, and even if a police party should come and try to make us leave. Only then shall I deserve to be congratulated. I want to go on uttering Ramanama even if there should be shooting taking place all around me.

Yesterday an illiterate woman (Sulochana Devi) displayed courage in having the culprit arrested. I admire her courage. It is my belief that however illiterate or uneducated one may be, it does not matter so long as one has a stout heart.

Bahawalpur people have written urging that we should hurry and get them out or they will all be killed. I must ask them not to become panicky. I have another wire from the Nawab Saheb only today in which he says that he is doing his utmost for these people. I have also not forgotten them.

I also have a telegram from Bombay sent by Sindhi Sikhs there. They say there are still some fifteen thousand Sikhs in Sind. Some have already been slaughtered. Their lives and their faith are in peril. They request that some arrangement should be made to get them out of Sind, if possible by plane. What I say here will reach them. Even a telegram takes longer. I shall not tolerate it if these 15,000 Sikhs are cut down



or their faith or dignity attacked. I will do what a single individual can do. Panditji himself thinks of everybody. I shall request the Pakistan and Sind Governments to reassure the Sikhs that so long as they are there they are not in any kind of danger. If they cannot give such an assurance they should collect them in one place or send them to India under escort. Sikhs are brave people. Who can dare to attack their faith? Let the Sikh brethren be reassured. I have sent some Parsee friends to see their condition.

A correspondent writes that when I was in jail in 1942 people had indulged in acts which were sometimes violent. If I should die while fasting there would be such a wave of violence in the country that even my God would cry out. My fast therefore would be violent and I should give it up. There is love as well as ignorance behind what the correspondent says. It is true that there was violence in the country following my imprisonment. The present situation is a consequence of that. Had the country then remained wholly non-violent, we would not have been in the plight that we are in today. I have also thought over the possibility that after I am no more there may be further strife. If God wants to save me He will do so. The death of a non-violent man will always have desirable consequences. But when Krishna was no more the Yadavas did not become better and purer. They destroyed themselves in fratricidal strife. I shall not weep over it. But I am a poor lowly individual. Why should anyone take to fighting after I am gone? But God sometimes makes the very lowly His instrument. I am told Hindus and Muslims will not fight here anymore. Muslim women too have begun to come out of their houses. This makes me happy. I must ask all to make their hearts the temple of God.

[From Hindi]; Courtesy: All India Radio. Also Prarthana Pravachan—II, pp. 328-30



119. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

NEW DELHI,

January 22, 1948

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

By the grace of God, I am as you see slowly recovering my strength. (For the first time after his fast, Gandhiji was able to walk up to the prayer ground.) I hope very soon I shall be as strong as ever. But it is in the hands of God. A friend writes saying that Jawaharlal may spare a room or two in his large house for the refugees, and other ministers, army officers and Government executives may also similarly spare some accommodation in their houses, but then, he asks, how many refugees can we house in this way? There are many who give verbal assurance but only a few act on them.

I agree that only a few thousand refugees can be housed in this way. But that is not important. What is important is that leading men and officers will have set an example. In England if the King makes the smallest sacrifice, like giving up a glass of wine, the gesture is greatly appreciated. Every civilized country appreciates such gestures. It also creates a good impression among the refugees who feel that people are doing the best for them and they too should try and face difficulties bravely. But if this leads to people rushing to Delhi in the belief that they will be better looked after here it will spoil things.

Another difficulty has been placed before me. People say that formerly the Congress could collect even a lakh of rupees only with the greatest difficulty. Today it can disburse crores of rupees. This is the power which it had been fighting for. But they are following in the footsteps of the British Government in the matter of spending lavishly. Some say that since we are now running the Government we must spend lavishly and live in style, otherwise our prestige outside India will suffer. But if we want to compete with the British in the lavishness they show in maintaining their dignity, we shall have to be as well off as they are. But our per capita income is nowhere near that of England. We are an extremely poor country. If, therefore, we compete with others in the matter of spending we shall be destroyed. I hope our representatives abroad will realize this. They should not try to compete with America in throwing dinners, banquets and parties. That even our self-sacrificing Congressmen should fall into such erroneous ways is something that should make us sit up and think. People



also object to ministers getting higher salaries than other people. If Sardar Patel is paid Rs. 1,500 a month, then they say they should at least be paid Rs. 500. This is not the way of living in India. When we are all trying to purify ourselves why should we think along such lines? We do not judge people by the money they have.

I have read out to you the wire describing the plight of certain Muslims in Gwalior. (Vide "Speech at Prayer Meeting", 20-1-1948.) A worker from there came to me saying that he had good news. He says that the Maharaja of Gwalior has handed over all power to the people. (The Maharaja of Gwalior had announced his decision to form an interim government having the support of the majority party in the legislature.) But if the Praja Mandal people show discrimination and drive out Muslims, how can I be happy over it? I shall be happy if you tell me that there will be no discrimination and that no ill will would be shown against anyone, be he a Hindu or Muslim or Parsi or Christian. Then I shall congratulate you and bless you. The Maharaja has become the servant of the people. In this yajna of self-purification everyone, including the ruler and the ruled, should participate. Only then shall we be able to stand before the world. If we want to carry the world on the right path and save it there is no other way before us.

[From Hindi]; Courtesy: All India Radio. Also Prarthana Pravachan—II, pp. 331-2



120. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

NEW DELHI,

January 23, 1948

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

I have many things to say today. I shall try to deal with as many as I can. Today is Subhas Babu's birthday. I have told you I cannot remember anyone's Birthday or death anniversary. Someone reminded me of Subhas Babu's birthday. Subhas Babu was a votary of violence while I am a devotee of ahimsa. But what does it matter? I know that the most important thing is that we should learn from other people's virtues. As Tulsidas says:

The Lord has created this world full of lifeless and living things and virtues and vices. The wise like the swan take the milk of virtue and leave out the waste of water.

We should be like the swan and take the milk of virtue. Man has virtues as well as vices. We should emulate him in his virtues and forget his deficiencies. Subhas was a great patriot. He laid down his life for the country. He was not by nature a fighter but he became commander of an army and took up arms against a great empire. The soldiers of that army included Hindus, Muslims, Parsis and Christians. He never considered himself only a Bengali. He had no use for parochialism or caste distinctions. In his eyes all were Indians and servants of India. He treated all alike. It never occurred to him that since he was the commander he deserved more and others less. Let us therefore in remembering Subhas think of his great virtues and purge our hearts of malice.

Once a friend who was an eminent advocate asked me to define Hinduism. I told him I was neither a lawyer like him nor a religious leader and was really unable to define Hinduism, but I would suggest that a Hindu was one who had equal respect for all religions. Subhas had equal respect for all religions and he easily won every heart. It is good to remember such things on this occasion.

I told you some time ago of the tragic happenings in a village of Gwalior in which some Muslims were killed. (Vide "Speech at Prayer Meeting", 20-1-1948.) I have been making inquiries and I have a letter in this regard. The correspondent has given his name. He says I was wrong in saying that the place where murder, arson and looting are said to



have occurred was Ratlam. It was really Jahangirpur which is in Gwalior State. He says that the report was not quite accurate. No doubt there was some disturbance but it was a private quarrel involving some Hindus and some Muslims. He says that it was not right to give the incident a communal colour and that no one was killed. I must place before you whatever reaches me. If people fabricate stories in this way, it must lead to widespread misunderstanding. If you must exaggerate, you should exaggerate your own shortcomings. Only then can it be said that we are following the path of self-purification.

I have a telegram from Mysore, saying that although what I have achieved in Delhi is quite credible, one cannot say that it has had any effect in Mysore for there has been rioting there. There is also news to this effect in the newspapers. I know the Hindus and Muslims of Mysore. I have stayed there many times. I also know the people running the Government there and I have asked them to explain to the world everything that has happened. There is no doubt that some tragic events have taken place in Mysore.

I also have a telegram from some Muslims in Junagadh. It is a lengthy one but it is good. They say that ever since the Sardar took over the administration of Junagadh and a Regional Commissioner was appointed, they have been treated with justice and fairness. They assure me that no one can create a rift between Hindus and Muslims there. A referendum is soon to take place in Junagadh (The Government of India had decided to hold a referendum in Junagadh, Babariawad, Mangrol, Manavadar, Bantwa and Sardargarh in the third week of February.) and when that happens Muslims will vote for the continuation of the present arrangement.

There is also a wire from Meerut from the local Hindus. They say that the fast has created a very good effect. They have no malice against the nationalist Muslims but if I think that the Muslim Leaguers have become good or will ever become good, I shall have to repent. They praise my ahimsa but say that it cannot be effective in politics, that it should be confined only to spiritual matters. Then they express their approval of the present Government consisting of Panditji, the Sardar and others and say that it should not be changed. I have not so far heard anything suggesting that a change is impending. I cannot imagine who can change them or dismiss them. But still people talk and exaggerate. The Meerut Hindus have participated fully in the struggle for freedom. But they are in error in what they say. In politics we cannot say that we shall trust some people and not trust others. The people who are in the Government



today have got to be trusted. We shall also have to trust the Muslims. If we have decided to live as brothers with Muslims we cannot distrust any Muslim even if he is a Muslim Leaguer. Similarly, if Muslims say that all Hindus and Sikhs are wicked it will be nonsense. All that we can do is to bring it to the notice of the Government that such and such a person is bad and then it will be for the Government to punish him in any way. We must not take the law into our own hands. It will be barbarism.

I continue to receive numerous wires. I cannot answer all the senders individually. I thank all of them through this meeting. May their blessings bear fruit.

[From Hindi]; Courtesy: All India Radio. Also Prarthana Pravachan—II, pp. 333-5



121. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

NEW DELHI,

January 24, 1948

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

I requested you to maintain silence during the prayer meeting. For some time you were quiet, but later when the prayer was going on some women carried on a conversation and children were screaming. I have repeatedly said that when children cry they should be taken out of the meeting. Good manners demand that women should not keep their crying children in the meeting.

Today I will deal with a lengthy telegram, which I had no time to take up yesterday. It says that the agreement that had been signed between the two Governments for expatriation of the prisoners and abducted girls was a good one but that it only lasted for a short while and has now been broken. The reason for this seems to have been the condition laid down by the West Punjab Government that it would implement the agreement only after all the States in East Punjab had undertaken to return all the Muslim girls held anywhere under their jurisdiction.

I can see no difficulty in this if the same should apply to the States in West Punjab even if there are fewer States there than in East Punjab. It is true that difficulties crop up in implementing such an agreement. When the agreement was signed no difficulties were raised. What does it matter? All the girls whether on this side or that side should be restored. It does not seem to me to be right that if ten girls are returned by the West Punjab Government East Punjab should also return only that number and no more. All the girls held in East Punjab, all the women and men who are prisoners should be returned unconditionally. But today this does not happen because there is ill feeling. What does it matter that there are more girls held in West Punjab than in East Punjab? I say that we should not think on these lines. It is all a mistake. To carry away one person is as much a mistake as to carry away a hundred. If more were not carried away it is only because the ruffians were not able to—not because they did not intend to—carry away so many girls or imprison so many men. A process that has been once set in motion should not be hampered. In fact the agreement should have been extended to cover other things too. If the two Governments meet in a spirit of amity and fully resolve that they will not go to war, the way will become clear. I shall



therefore humbly ask the two Governments to forget what has happened and to correct themselves. We must cleanse our hearts. But even if our hearts have not been cleansed we can still do what is clearly our duty. Self-purification means that we purge our hearts.

I have been receiving complaints that not all the girls abducted are returned from West Punjab. I have the same complaint concerning girls held in East Punjab. I have not conducted any investigation and cannot say who is lying and who is telling the truth. But if the complaint is true with regard to West Punjab it is a matter of shame. The same holds good for East Punjab. But there is yet another complaint against West Punjab. It is said they say one thing and do the opposite of it. All I can say is that this should be put right or else the purpose for which I fasted has been fulfilled in letter but not in spirit. (At this stage the chatter had become so loud that Gandhiji said he could not proceed with what he wanted to say and brought the meeting to a close. He stressed the importance of the women observing complete silence at the prayers and suggested that those with children should stand at the fringe so as not to disturb the meeting.)

[From Hindi]; Courtesy: All India Radio. Also Prarthana Pravachan—II, pp. 335-7



122. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

(It being Gandhiji's silence day, Pyarelal translated the written speech into Hindustani and read it out after the prayers.)

NEW DELHI,

January 26, 1948

This day, 26th January, is Independence Day. This observance was quite appropriate when we were fighting for independence we had not seen nor handled. Now we have handled it and we seem to be disillusioned. At least I am, even if you are not.

What are we celebrating today? Surely not our disillusionment. We are entitled to celebrate the hope that the worst is over and that we are on the road to showing the lowliest of the villager that it means his freedom from serfdom and that he is no longer a serf born to serve the cities and towns of India but that he is destined to exploit the city-dwellers for the advertisement of the finished fruits of well-thought-out labours, that he is the salt of the Indian earth and that it means also equality of all classes and creeds, never the domination and superiority of the major community over a minor, however insignificant it may be in numbers or influence. Let us not defer the hope and make the heart sick. Yet, what are the strikes and a variety of lawlessness but a deferring of the hope? These are symptoms of our sickness and weakness. Let labour realize its dignity and strength. Capital has neither dignity nor strength compared to labour. These men in the street also have. In a well-ordered democratic society there is no room, no occasion, for lawlessness or strikes. In such a society there are ample lawful means for vindicating justice. Violence veiled or unveiled must be taboo. Strikes in Kanpur, coal mines or elsewhere mean material loss to the whole society not excluding the strikers themselves. I need not be reminded that this declaration does not lie well in the mouth of one like me who has been responsible for so many successful strikes. If there be such critics they ought not to forget that then there was neither independence nor the kind of legislation we now have. I wonder if we can remain free from the fever of power politics or the bid for power which afflicts the political world, the East and the West. Before leaving this topic of the day, let us permit ourselves to hope that though geographically and politically India is divided into two, at heart we shall ever be friends and brothers helping and respecting one another and be one for the outside world. Decontrol of cloth (The Government had decided to decontrol



cloth from January 19.) has been welcomed in all quarters. There never was a scarcity of cloth. How can it be when there is enough cotton and enough hands in the land for spinning and weaving? Equally welcome is the removal of control on firewood and coal. It is remarkable that there is now a glut in the market of gur, the poor man's supply for caloric deficiency. There would be no remedy for glut nor for reaching places outside the boundary of production unless there is quick locomotion. Let a correspondent in the know speak on this subject:

Needless to say that efficiency of the rail and road transport is the chief factor for the success of the decontrol policy. If there is no improvement in the railway transport there is a danger of countrywide famine and the entire collapse of the decontrols. The present working of the railway transport is a living danger to these decontrols and controls alike. The terrible contrast of different prices prevalent in different parts of India for the same commodity is chiefly due to this transport bottleneck. If gur is sold at Rs. 8 per maund at Rohtak and at Rs. 50 in Bombay, we must say there is something wrong with the working of the railways. Thousands of wagons in the length and breadth of the country are not kept moving. Wagons are not even unloaded for months and months together. Corruption is rampant in a most virulent form in the booking of these wagons, in the garb of 'scarcity of wagons and coal' and 'priority for different commodities'. For the booking of one wagonload one has to spend hundreds of rupees and spend days together in the railway yards. Even the best efforts of the worthy Transport Minister (John Matthai) have cut no ice in so far as the supply of these wagons and their constant moving is concerned.

The entire rail and road transport requires a complete overhaul by the Transport Minister to make the decontrols a thorough success. Then only decontrols shall prove a blessing to the poor for the benefit of whom they are being pursued. Millions of villagers, farmers and labourers are hit owing to the defective system in this rail and road transport as their produce seldom reaches the market.

As stated in my previous letter, the rationing of petrol ought to be removed and the monopoly and permit system of the road transport may be abolished altogether. This monopoly system is benefiting a few transport companies only but has rendered the lives of millions and millions of our countrymen difficult.



Ninety-five per cent of the success in decontrols solely depends upon the efficient working of the railways and vehicles, i. e., in keeping the wagons moving, and abolishing the rationing of petrol and the permit and monopoly system of the lorries. This shall bring from the remotest corners of the country lakhs of tons of foodstuffs and all other produce profusely to the entire markets of the land.

The subject of corruption referred to by the correspondent is not new. Only it has become much worse than before. Restraint from without has practically gone. Corruption will go when the large number of persons given to the unworthy practice realize that the nation does not exist for them but that they do for the nation. It requires a high code of morals, extreme vigilance on the part of those who are free from the corrupt practice and who have influence over corrupt servants. Indifference in such matters is criminal. If our evening prayers are genuine, they must play no mean part in removing from our midst the demon of corruption.

The Hindustan Times, 27-1-1948, and Harijan, 1-2-1948



123. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

(The Hindi version in Prarthana Pravachan has been collated with the report in The Hindustan Times.)

NEW DELHI,

January 27, 1948

Gandhiji began his post-prayer address by asking how many Muslims were present and expressed his disappointment when only one hand went up. The other day he had advised that each Hindu or Sikh should bring at least one Muslim friend along and he had expected they would do that.

Gandhiji next described his morning visit to the Dargah Sharif at Mehrauli.

No one had difficulty in visiting the fair. When I asked the Muslims whether as many people visited the shrine this year as in the previous years, they said that some at least must have been too frightened to go. This shows that there are amongst us people who cause a scare. They say that what happened in Allahabad could happen here and ask what the Hindus would do then. It is a shameful situation that one man should be frightened of another man. But at least I observed at the fair that there were as many Hindus and Sikhs as there were Muslims. I also saw something that distressed me. The shrine is very ancient. It is second only to the Ajmer shrine. The chief thing about it was the beauty of its marble carvings and inlay work. Much of it, though not all, has been destroyed. I was sorry to see it. It is sheer vandalism. Have we fallen so low that we should violate and desecrate a tomb of a saint on which thousands of rupees had been spent? I cannot go into the account that says that what happened in Pakistan was ten times worse. To me it is meaningless to consider whether the crime committed was of greater or less magnitude. To me it is a shameful thing. If the whole world indulges in shameful acts does it mean that we should do the same?

You will surely agree with me that we should not resort to such shameful conduct. I am told the shrine has always attracted large crowds both of Hindus and Muslims who go there to seek fulfilment of some wish. It is associated with the name of a saint in whose eyes Hindus and Muslims were all equal. This is a matter of history and it does not do to falsify history. We should have respect for such men of God and should not be guided by what happens in Pakistan.



I see from the newspapers today that at one place¹ in Pakistan one hundred and thirty Hindus and Sikhs have been murdered. There was also looting. There are many small tribes of Muslims around the borders of the Frontier Province. These tribes attacked the Hindus and killed them. No one says that these Hindus had caused any harm. The Pakistan Government says that it took prompt action and many of the attackers were put to death. We do not know how far that is true. But since the Pakistan Government says so we should accept it. Let us not be provoked and start killing the Muslims here. Today you are living like brothers but if you harbour any malice in your heart you will be untrue to the pledge you have taken. It is for our Government to ask for an account from the Pakistan Government. Our part is only to keep our pledge to keep our hearts clean.

Rajkumari (Amrit Kaur) had been on a visit to Ajmer. She told me of a tragic and shameful situation. It seems the Harijans there, from whom people take a lot of work which they willingly perform, live surrounded by dirt and filth. The administration there is our own. And the officers—Hindus and Sikhs—work under our Government. How can they allow this disgraceful state of affairs to continue? There are many white-collared Hindus there who earn a lot of money and are quite well-to-do. Why do they not go to the Harijan locality and stay there even for a day? If they went there they would be nauseated and some of them might even die. It is criminal that people whose only sin is that they were born Harijans should be allowed to live in such squalor. I have been to the Harijan locality in Delhi too. The conditions there are pretty bad. But Ajmer seems to be much worse in this respect. We have secured our independence, but it is of no value if we cannot stop such a thing. And it can be done in a day. Can we not provide a piece of dry ground for the Harijans? If they must remove garbage, as they do, must they also be made to live in it? We seem to have lost our reason and we have become heartless. We have forgotten God. That is why we continue to commit such crimes. How can we then find fault with others?

Finally I want to tell you about Mirpur. I have referred to the matter briefly earlier. Mirpur is in Kashmir. It has been occupied by the raiders. A number of women and children there have been abducted. They include not only young women but also some elderly ones. They are in the power of the raiders who, I have no doubt, have violated their honour. The food given to them is very bad. A few of them are within the border of Pakistan. Some of them may have been taken up to the Jhelum in the Gujrat district.



I must tell the raiders that they must exercise a modicum of restraint. What they are doing will bring about the downfall of Islam and yet they say that they are doing all this for a free Kashmir.

I can understand it if people indulge in plunder and rapine for food. But it is too much to assault innocent young girls and to deprive them of food and clothing. Is this what the Koran teaches? I must ask the Pakistan Government to recover all the abducted women and girls and let them go back to their homes.

The Mirpur people who came to me are quite strong and sturdy. But they feel disconsolate. They ask me why it is that such a powerful Government cannot do anything about this. I tried to explain matters to them. Jawaharlal himself has been deeply distressed and is trying to do what he can. But how does his grieving or his trying help? How can those who have lost their all, who have been ruined and separated from their nearest and dearest, be comforted? One of the men who came to see me has lost fifteen of his relatives. He asked me what was to happen to those still left there. I must ask the raiders and the Government of Pakistan, for the sake of humanity and for the sake of God, to return all the abducted women with due respect and without waiting to be asked. It is their duty. I have enough knowledge of Islam about which I have read a good deal. Nowhere does Islam bid people to carry away women and keep them in such a disreputable condition. It is irreligion, not religion. It is worship of Satan, not of God.

The Hindustan Times, 28-1-1948, and Prarthana Pravachan—II, pp. 344-7



124. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

(The Hindi version in Prarthana Pravachan has been collated with the report in The Hindustan Times.)

NEW DELHI,

January 28, 1948

Gandhiji said he had received a complaint from some friends in Bahawalpur that they had asked for an appointment with him but failed to get it. Gandhiji knew they were in distress and he would manage to find time for them if that would comfort them. He, however, desired to assure them that everything possible was being done.

Dr. Sushila Nayyar and Mr. Leslie Cross went to Bahawalpur and the Nawab has promised to help them in every way. In the Union Capital, by the grace of God, there is again peace among the three communities. This will certainly improve the situation all over India. You know in South Africa our people are fighting for their rights. Here in India there are no laws depriving the people of the right of owning land or living wherever they please. It is true we have reduced Harijans to some such condition but for the rest of society that is not so. But I have seen with my own eyes that that is so in South Africa. The Indians therefore are having to put up a struggle to safeguard their rights and in defence of the honour of India. They can resort to various means in their struggle but they claim to be satyagrahis and their struggle has taken the form of satyagraha. They keep on sending cables. They cannot even move from one province to another without a permit. South Africa is like a continent. It is a very large country. Indians wishing to go to the Transvaal from Natal can do so only if they have a permit. They say it is as much their country as anyone else's and ask why there should be such restrictions imposed on their movements. Many have succeeded in moving to the Transvaal and the Government this time has been decent. They have not been arrested so far. They first went to Volksrust which is the first city after crossing the border. There were policemen present in strength but they only looked on and did not arrest them. There they found a motor vehicle and proceeded in it further on. Then a meeting was held there at which they were given a warm welcome. I thought I should give you this information. Those Indians have performed an act of great courage. Indians in South Africa are few in number but, if they all become true satyagrahis, their victory is certain and no obstacle can stop them. But this has yet to be achieved. There are, as here, many kinds of people. There are Hindus and there are Muslims. They all



work together. They know they cannot fight their battle separately. They have reached Johannesburg but they cannot stop there. They must go on and on till they are arrested. The Government has a right to arrest them, for satyagraha implies the acceptance of punishment for the violation of a law. They deserve congratulations. I shall ask the Government of South Africa not to be too severe with people who carry on their struggle with such decency. They should understand their grievances and come to a settlement with them. Why should it be that one with a white skin cannot have a dialogue with one with a black skin? Why should Indians have to fight for their legitimate rights? How does it harm the whites if Indians too are allowed to live there? Today we are also a free country as South Africa is and are members of the same Commonwealth, which implies that we should all live like brothers and equals. But if they consider Indians their enemies and deprive them of their basic civil rights, then they are not behaving as friends but as enemies. It is something which is difficult to understand. Why should they look down on the coloured people? Is it because they are industrious and thrifty? I shall tell the Government of South Africa through this meeting that it should mend its ways. I have myself lived in South Africa for twenty years and I can therefore say that it is my country. I should have told you all this yesterday but I could not do so.

Some Muslims from Mysore had sent me a wire a few days ago saying that my fast had produced no effect there and Muslims were still being killed there. I had also said a few words on the matter. (Vide "Speech at Prayer Meeting", 23-1-1948) Now I have a telegram from the Home Minister of Mysore in which he has refuted the charge made in the wire and has explained that the Government is trying to be just to the Muslims. I must tell the Muslims of Mysore what I have told all others, namely, that they should not indulge in exaggeration. This hampers me and I am able to do nothing. If anything they should try to water down such reports. This is the only way Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs can live as brothers.

Our people are so simple that they send money by post. I recollect an incident from my childhood. My father had some jewellery among which was a valuable pearl. He mailed it by post. That was not cheating but it certainly was risky because, if anybody had suspected it, they could have opened the envelope. In any case the money was not saved because he wanted the acknowledgment by wire. It seems there still are innocent people like my father. A friend sent currency notes of over a thousand rupees in this way. He had the envelope neither registered nor insured. He sent it by



ordinary post. When there is dishonesty and corruption everywhere it is a matter of great credit to our Post office that envelopes with money are safely delivered. They do not even want to see what an envelope might contain. My advice to people who send money like this is not to take such risk because in the postal department there are bound to be some dishonest men and, if the money is misappropriated in the post, the loss will be mine or that of the Harijans for whom this money is intended, and also of the donor. I congratulate the postal department on displaying such honesty. Let the other departments follow their example and take care of other people's money and keep away from graft and speculation.

The Hindustan Times, 29-1-1948, and Prarthana Pravachan—II, pp. 348-51



125. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

NEW DELHI,

January 29, 1948

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

Of the many things I wish to tell you, I have chosen six for today, for I must finish in 15 minutes.

I notice that we are beginning a little late, which is wrong. Sushila has gone to Bahawalpur, to see the refugees still stranded there. She has no other mission. Mr. Leslie Cross of the Friends' Service has gone with her. My idea was that someone from the Friends Unit should go and observe the conditions of refugees there and report to me. There was no proposal for Sushila to go. But when she heard about the plan she suggested that she be permitted to accompany Mr. Cross. She has known him ever since she went to Noakhali. She is an efficient doctor and she belongs to the Gujrat district in Punjab. She too has suffered a good deal. She had a large property which she has lost. But her heart has not become poisoned. She said it would help if she went because she could speak Punjabi, Hindustani, Urdu and English and could be of use to Mr. Cross. I was delighted. There are of course hazards but she said she was not afraid. Had she been afraid she would not have gone to work in Noakhali. Many people who live in the Punjab have been completely ruined in every way. At least she can still find food and other provisions. I consulted Mr. Cross and he welcomed the idea. He said she could act as an interpreter. He is from the Red Cross. The function of the Red Cross is to provide medical relief to war victims. Whether Dr. Sushila went with Mr. Cross or Mr. Cross went with Sushila is a complicated question but they are friends and like each other. They have gone to render service and not to make money. They will observe and give me a report of what they see. The Nawab keeps writing to me. After I have the report from Mr. Cross and Sushila Nayyar I shall tell you more about the matter.

Some people, perhaps forty of them, from Bannu had come to me. They have suffered hardships no doubt but they are able to walk. Some had injured fingers, some had other wounds on other parts of the body. I saw them just now and told them to explain everything to Brijkrishna. They were all respectable men. They must have been full of anger but they accepted my advice. One of them—I did not ask whether he was



a refugee—said I had done enough harm already and that I should stop and disappear from the scene. He did not care whether I was a mahatma. I asked him where he wanted me to go. He said that I might go to the Himalayas. I had to rebuke him. He is not as old as I am and is stronger. But I could not afford to become nervous. I asked why I should go to the Himalayas merely because he wished it, when there were many who wanted me to stay. There are many who praise me and there are others who abuse me. What am I to do? I can only do as God bids. You may say that you do not believe in God. But then you must allow me to go my way. God is the help of the afflicted. But an afflicted person is not God. When I claim that every woman is my own sister or daughter, then her suffering becomes my suffering. Why do you presume that I do not understand the sufferings of the refugees? Why do you presume that because I am a friend of Muslims I am an enemy of Hindus and Sikhs? I cannot run away because anyone wants me to run away. I have not taken to service at any one's bidding. I have become what I have become at the bidding of God. God will do what He wills. He may take me away. I shall not find peace by going to the Himalayas. I want to find peace in the midst of turmoil or I want to die in the turmoil. My Himalayas are here.

I keep receiving complaints about the refugees. They are given food and drink and clothing and they are helped in every possible way. But they do not want to work. I have said that if the refugees want to end their sufferings, if they want to convert suffering into happiness and serve India and serve themselves, they must not shirk work. A refugee has no right to live comfortably without working. The Gita says: “Eat only after you have performed *yajna*.” Eat what remains after the *yajna*. This has not been said only for me but also for you and all others. It applies also to the refugees. Even if a millionaire eats and does not work, he is a burden on the earth. Of course one can understand if you are a cripple, or if you are blind or too old. But a robust man has no excuse for not working. Let those who are strong of body clean lavatories in the camp; let them spin, let them do any other work that comes to hand. Let them teach their boys.

Someone came to see me today. I forgot his name. He mentioned peasants. I said if I had my way our Governor-General would be a peasant; our Prime Minister would be a peasant. In my childhood I learnt a poem which says “O farmer, you are the king, the master of the whole world”. What would we eat if the peasant did not produce food? But today we have made him a slave. What can a peasant do? Must he acquire academic degrees such as B.A. and M.A.? If he does that he will be ruined. He



will be no more good for wielding the pickaxe. If the man who produced food grain out of the earth becomes our Chief, our Prime Minister, the face of India will change.

There is a scarcity of food in Madras. A representative of the Madras Government had come here to plead with Shri Jairamdas (Jairamdas Doulatram (1891-1979); Editor of The Hindustan Times, 1925-27; General Secretary of Congress, 1931; Governor of Bihar, 1947-48 and of Assam, 1950-56; Minister of Food and Agriculture in the Union Cabinet, 1948-50) that he should make food grain available for Madras. This attitude of the people of Madras saddens me. I want to point out to them that they can find enough things to eat in their own province such as groundnut, coconut and various other things. They also have plenty of fish which most of them take. What need is there for them to go out and beg? It is not right for them to insist on rice and that too polished rice which has all its food value removed or to insist on wheat in place of rice. They can mix groundnut flour or coconut flour with rice flour and thus keep the wolf from the door. What they need is self-confidence and dedication. I know the people of Madras quite well. I had with me in South Africa people drawn from all the linguistic areas of the Province. During the satyagraha march¹ they were given a pound and a half of bread and an ounce of sugar each day. But they surprised me when on our striking camp they would pick out some edible greens or some other thing and cook it singing away in great delight. How can such resourceful people ever feel so helpless? True we were all coolies. But then in honest work lies our freedom and the satisfaction of all our basic needs.

[From Hindi]; Courtesy: All India Radio. Also Prarthana Pravachan—II, pp. 352-6



126. REMARKS ON WAY TO PRAYER MEETING, January 30, 1948

(The report in Pyarelal's "The Fateful Friday", has been collated with the Gujarati version in Dilhiman Gandhiji.)

NEW DELHI,

January 30, 1948

"Bapu, your watch must be feeling very neglected. You would not look at it," remarked Abha. Why should I, since you are my time-keepers? "But you do not look at the time-keepers", rejoined one of them. Bapu laughed again. The last remark he uttered as he cleared the steps leading to the prayer-ground was: It is your fault that I am ten minutes late. It is the duty of nurses to carry on their work even if God himself should be present there. If it is time to give medicine to a patient and one feels hesitant about it, the poor patient will die. So it is with prayers. It irks me if I am late for prayers even by a minute. (According to Manu Gandhi's account, as Gandhiji passed along the cordoned lane through the prayer congregation, he took his hands off the shoulders of the two girls to acknowledge the namaskars of the prayer congregation. All of a sudden someone from the crowd roughly elbowed his way towards them. Manu Gandhi, thinking that he was coming forward to touch Gandhiji's feet, remonstrated saying something about it being already late for the prayer and tried to stop the intruder by thrusting back his hand. He violently pushed her away, causing the notebook, the spittoon and the mala, which she was carrying in her hands, to fall down. As she stooped down to pick up the scattered things, he planted himself in front of Gandhiji and fired in quick succession three shots at point-blank range. The last words Gandhiji uttered were "Hey Ram". A spreading crimson spot appeared on the white clothes. The hands which had been raised in namaskar to the gathering slowly came down. The limp body softly sank to the ground. Gandhiji breathed his last at 5.17 p. m.)

Harijan, 15-2-1948, and Dilhiman Gandhiji—II, pp. 426-7

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